



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



23458.15.9

Harvard College Library



FROM THE BEQUEST OF

SAMUEL SHAPLEIGH

(Class of 1789)

LATE LIBRARIAN OF HARVARD COLLEGE

Q. 112

STRAINS FROM THE STRAND.

STRAINS
FROM THE STRAND.

TRIFLES IN VERSE.

BY

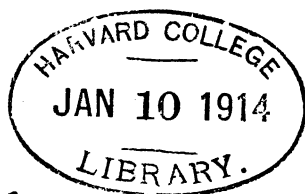
HENRY S. LEIGH.

AUTHOR OF "CAROLS OF COCKAYNE," "A TOWN GARLAND," ETC.

LONDON :

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8, CATHERINE ST., STRAND,
1882.

23458;18.9



Shapleigh fund

CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS,
CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS.

TO
EDWIN CANTON, F.R.C.S.,
These Rhymes are Dedicated
BY HIS GRATEFUL PATIENT,
THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THIS little volume consists, like my former collections, of short pieces which have already made their appearance in various periodicals. Had these verses come before the world, in their present form, a quarter of a century ago, I might confidently have recommended them to the perusal of that now extinct being, the "nice young man for a small tea-party." To any of its readers who are in the habit of composing simple airs, and singing them at the pianoforte, the book may even yet be of some service. One merit, at least, I can claim for it—Variety.

H. S. L.

STRAND, 1882.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
MY BIRTHPLACE.	I
TO A ROSE	3
AN OLD STAGER. MY LAST NIGHTMARE	6
A GERMAN BAND	8
MODERN ARCADY	10
A GHOST WANTED !	12
PUTTING IT OFF	14
EARLY IMPRESSIONS	16
CRESCENDO	18
WAITING FOR AN ANSWER	20
A "GUSHER"	22
GOING TO SLEEP	24
GETTING UP	26
A SIGH FROM THE STALLS	28
CHEERFUL !	30
A LOST HOUR	32
AT MY TOILET	34
LONELY	36
A TRUE PATRIOT	38
THE CONVALESCENT COCKNEY	40
AN AWFUL WARNING	42
A PROPOSAL	44
THE BELLE OF THE ARCADE	46
A HAPPY FAMILY	48

A*

	PAGE
TO MY HOUSEMAID. A CRY OF ANGUISH	50
NOT MUCH	52
STANZAS (ON READING "I'D BE A BUTTERFLY")	53
AN ANSWER. TO MY MOTHER-IN-LAW	55
HERE WE ARE AGAIN !	57
HYMEN IN NUBIBUS	59
BALLAD	61
MY ELEMENT	63
HOPELESS !.	65
WHAT CARE I ?	67
OPTIMISM	68
A LITTLE MUSIC.	70
A LITTLE CRAZY	72
A BIOGRAPHY	74
A PERFECT ANCHORITE	76
A CONSTANT READER.	78
THE DOOMED ONE	81
THE CARES OF A CONDUCTOR	83
ALL ON ONE SIDE	85
LIVING IN HOPE	86
NO THOROUGHFARE	88
ANYTHING FOR A CHANGE.	90
MY NEIGHBOURS	92
MY EDUCATION	94
VAIN REGRETS	96
ONLY FANCY	97
THE BILIOUS BACCHANAL	99
SOUVENIRS	101
OVER FORTY	103
RHYMES (?)	105

CONTENTS.

xi

	PAGE
THE CRY OF THE CAPTIVE	107
HALF-WAY	109
THE PENITENT	110
MY TREASURES.	112
MY CARTE—A FEVERISH DREAM	114
'T WAS NOT SO LONG AGO.	116
A MILD COMPLIMENT	118
OUR KITTEN	119
ADVERTISEMENTS	120
THE BIOGRAPHY OF BRIGGS	122
SUSPIRIA !	124
AN INFIDEL	125
SECOND THOUGHTS	127
AND YET !	128
A NOBLE CALLING	129
A PHILISTINE	131
OLD AND NEW.	133
QUALIFYING	135
DRAWBACKS	137
NOT QUITE	138
PEGGY DEAR ! A PASTORAL POEM	140
OPEN TO CONVICTION	142
NO GOOD WISHING	144
A RECANTATION	146
SOLOMON IN THE SOUTH	148
A DILEMMA	149
LEADING QUESTIONS.	151
TO MY DARLING	153
TIRED !	154
STRIKING NOVELTIES	156

	PAGE
FAINT PRAISE	158
BIRTHDAY LINES	160
A WHIM OF MINE	162
LOVE IN ABSENCE	164
TREASURY-DAY	166
TWO LINES	168
AMATORY VERSES	170
TO MY MUSE	171
EVENINGS AT HOME	173
MY CAREER	175
DE PROFUNDIS	177



STRAINS FROM THE STRAND.

MY BIRTHPLACE.

A ogni uccello
Suo nido é bello.

UNTIL my earthly race be run
The spot shall I remember—
Each year from January One
Till Thirty-one December.
A shrine to me the house will be
(To whomsoe'er they let it) ;
Whatever changes it may see,
I'll never more forget it.

No fields were nigh to greet the eye
With buttercup or daisy.
No lowing herds wound slowly by,
Luxuriously lazy.
No sign was near of pebbly brook,
That loves to brawl or babble ;
Where patient swains with rod and hook
In Waltonising dabble.

STRAINS FROM THE STRAND.

In search of either hill or vale
The eye would vainly wander,
And vainly seek a dell or dale
Where bards could stray and ponder.
No crocus ever hailed the spring,
No rose adorned the summer.
We never heard the cuckoo sing,
To charm the wrapt new-comer.

The cabs, the 'buses, and the cars
Went quickly by, and gaily.
(I hear, within my heart of hearts,
Their pleasing clatter daily).
From hour to hour, from chime to chime,
The place was never quiet.
So Noise became to me in time
A necessary diet.

A calm and quiet country life
May have its pretty features ;
But I would watch the stir and strife
Among my fellow-creatures.
Ay, straightway to my heart appeals
The hum of many voices,
And in the whirl of many wheels
My Cockney soul rejoices.

'Tis not so many miles away—
The street that I was born in.
(I pass the windows ev'ry day
That brought my natal morn in).
No street in ours or *any* land
I e'er can rank above it.
Then wonder not I sing the Strand,
And marvel not I love it.



TO A ROSE.

LOVELY child of sunny summer—
Pinn'd adroitly on my breast—
Whence art thou a prized new-comer?
How art thou my bosom-guest?
Nursling of the sultry weather,
Born of sunlight and the show'rs,
Wherefore meet we thus together
In this busy world of ours?

Speak! away with hesitation!
Tell me all about you *now*.
(In familiar conversation
We dismiss the "thee" and "thou.")
Tell me, I repeat, the story
Of the days you deemed so bright,
Ere you came to cast a glory
On this button-hole to-night.

Ne'er was I a blind believer
In the charms of country life.
Dearer much to me the fever
Of our city's hum and strife.
Yet your pastoral confessions
Might be welcome to mine ear.
Breathe your innocent impressions
While the breath is left you, dear.

STRAINS FROM THE STRAND.

Brought on earth to perish only—
Blooming only to decay—
Were you not, I ask you, lonely,
Living lots of miles away?
Friends you had, who all adored you,
Full of gay and giddy chat;
Still their tittle-tattle bored you,
And their jokes fell very flat.

Was it not a dull employment,
Idly waving on your stalk?
Would it not have been enjoyment
Getting off to take a walk?
Not for all the gems or metals
All the mines on earth can give,
With an earwig in my petals
E'en an instant could I live.

Clover, buttercups, or daisies
(Hidden far from vulgar view),
Though they reap not half your praises,
Lead a better life than *you*.
Daisies, buttercups, or clover—
Hermits of the hills or vales—
Never, when their time is over,
Come to die in swallow-tails.

Yet one comfort you may cherish,
Though it will not last you long;
Happy flow'r, 'tis yours to perish
'Mid the tumult of the throng.
Hark! although my gold repeater
Marks the advent of the morn—
Mirthful song in rugged metre
Gaily on the breeze is borne.

You and I have been together,
 Dining up at Eaton Square.
 Pretty creature, tell me whether
 All was not "quite utter" there.
 Meats were never more delicious,
 Wines with ours could never vie.
 Well as anyone could wish us
 Have we feasted, you and I.

To the Op'ra next I took you,
 Just in time to catch an act.
 ('Tis not oft the poet, look you,
 Could have done it—that's a fact.)
 Then to cards and conversation
 At the club we settled down.
 There's a round of dissipation !
 Aren't you glad you came to town ?





AN OLD STAGER.

MY LAST NIGHTMARE.

NO matter where—no matter when—that matters not a bit.
They played a comedy, methought ; and I was in the
pit.

I won the front—the middle seat—by struggling for it hard,
When lo ! a stranger darted in, contiguous to the bard.
I found my neighbour affable : he made a few remarks
On commerce and on politics, the weather and the parks.
'Twas only when an act was o'er he threw the mask aside,
Produced his hobby, *tout-à-coup*, and swiftly got astride.

“You don't remember Harley, sir? Of course ; but never
mind.

A quaint performer Harley was ; unequalled of his kind.
Grotesque in ev'ry feature, sir ; grotesque in ev'ry limb.
Law bless me, what a *Dogberry* the drama lost in *him* !
I'm not the man to go about and swear the present age
Has nobody presentable to place upon the stage.
No, not at all ; quite otherwise—but still we must allow,
In spite of all our funny men, we've not a Harley *now*.

“And Farren—there's another name, no easy one to match.
What *style*, sir ! That's the sort of thing you youngsters never
catch.

The grace, the charm, the elegance—the *everything*, I mean !
We lost Sir Peter Teazle, sir, when Farren left the scene.

Perhaps—to go from high to low—you *may* remember Wright?
'Not old enough?' Exactly so. I only said you *might*.
Not always over-delicate, but so intensely droll.
He nearly suffocated one—he did, upon my soul!

"By Jove, sir, they were jolly times, the old Adelphi days:
Paul Bedford, Wright, Miss Woolgar, shone in one colossal
blaze;

Leigh Murray, and a Mr. Smith—a Smith initialled O—
The chartered representative of residents below.
They had the Keeley couple, too; both always to the fore.
Sure such a pair was never seen—and will be never more.
Ah, what a woman, Mrs. K.!—You've parents, I suppose,
Who saw her play *Jack Sheppard*, sir, when Paul sang 'Jolly
Nose?'

"I never saw Macready, sir; but I remember Brooke.
I've seen the model British tar portrayed by 'Tippy' Cooke.
I recollect the fairy times, the bright Lyceum days,
When Planché brought us back again the genii and the fays.
I recollect—but surely, sir, you scarcely can expect
A chronological account of all I recollect.
Besides, you're growing sleepy, sir; I noticed *that* before.
I've wasted more than time enough. I shan't waste any more!"





A GERMAN BAND.

LOUDER, Karl! we cannot hear thee. Blaze away, my
lively Fritz.

Try, my Max, to blow thy bugle into little tiny bits.

Franz, my friend, how very rarely such a lonely spot you find !
Heinrich, let the spirit move thee. Gottlieb, thou art all
behind.

Here no traffic intercepts ye : here no constables intrude.
Could ye play more unmolested in a sylvan solitude ?
Craven, Salisbury, and Cecil—quiet streets beside the Strand—
Every possible allurements offer to a German Band.

Dreamy flageolet, beguile me, till my cares are cast aside.
Far away to blest Utopia bear me, strident ophicleide.
Bring me aid and bring me solace ; help me build the lofty
rhyme.

(Let the carping critic find ye not in tune and not in time.)
Flute, on soft and sunny ripples bear away my vain regret,
While my soul to rapture kindles o'er the blithesome clarionet.
Better judges may pronounce ye cracked, and bruised, and
second-hand ;

Still ye seem to suit each other, blended in a German Band.

Can we chide your many blunders, or deride your many faults ?
Not at all, my friends Teutonic. Let us hear another waltz.
(Just a little sharp, your cornet ; still your piccolo is flat.
When we take the two together, who can cavil much at *that* ?)

Any pretty strain to take me up the Danube or the Rhine.
Strauss, or Lanner, or Labitzky ; all the three are pets of
mine.
Raff and Brahms are too æsthetic. Wagner's works are very
grand ;
Yet his music would appal me, rendered by a German Band.

Tell me whence ye hail, my brothers. Name the towns that
gave ye birth.
Say what lucky spots ye favoured when ye kindly came on
earth.

Max, methinks Bavaria bore thee. Karl, thou hast a Saxon air.
Fritz and Franz, your countenances might have come from
anywhere ?

Gottlieb is a Brandenburger, yellow-haired, with eyes of blue.
Hans possesses a complexion Hanoverian in its hue.
Fate's fraternity hath bound ye, children of the Fatherland.
Stay and make your homes among us, light and lively German
Band !

Yet perchance ye feel a yearning for your Deutschland ever
dear.

Britain—though the waves obey her—makes a mess of lager-
beer.

Weak are we in kirsch and kümmel—not so very good at
schnapps ;

While we cannot reach the sausage Allemania boasts, perhaps.
Still our island has a story. We are brave and we are free.
Brave enough to bear the torment of your presence, as ye see.
Free as air in all our doings—or I scarce could understand
Why we tolerate the torture which is called a German Band.



MODERN ARCADY.

DEAR DAPHNE, let the busy throng
Pursue their countless avocations ;
And Greed and Pleasure speed along,
Intent on varied occupations.
Suppose we leave the world awhile—
Its hollow joys and empty labours—
To chat in free and easy style
About the folks we own for neighbours.

Beneath yon elm-tree come and sit,
Where not a soul can hear or see us ;
What sylvan solitude so fit
For Daphne and for Melibœus ?
Here gently sighs the summer breeze,
The dewdrops on the daisy glisten ;
We both may say whate'er we please,
For nobody is near to listen.

The changeful Corydon, they say,
No longer woos the tender Phyllis ;
'Twas only just the other day
He took a stroll with Amaryllis.
The last would be the better match ;
She still is young, and quite the lady.
Miss P. could scarce be called a "catch ;"
Her antecedents, too, are shady.

High play appears a costly sin,
 And last October or November
 Amyntas had the brokers in
 (Which month it was I don't remember).
 To play *écarté* at your club,
 Or whist, perhaps, is very jolly ;
 But laying ponies on the rub
 Is little short of utter folly.

Fair Delia, who could never touch
 A tiny glass of cherry-brandy,
 Now sips—and likes it very much—
 Whene'er she finds a bottle handy.
 When cherries pall—as cherries *do*—
 The nymph will care no more about them ;
 But manage in a week or two,
 To take her brandy neat without them.

Young Strephon's was a deal too rash
 To prove at all a happy marriage ;
 Though he and Chloe cut a dash,
 And go about, and keep a carriage.
 'Tis pleasant for a time, we know,
 To be extravagant and showy ;
 But I predicted long ago
 That he was not the man for Chloe.

Then Lalage through half the town
 Her best has done to scatter scandals,
 And vainly seeks to set us down
 As Goths, or Visigoths, or Vandals.
 'Tis well, dear Daphne, *we* can say
 No mortal ever yet has found us
 To spite or malice giving way,
 Or speaking ill of those around us.



A GHOST WANTED!

A SLAVE am I to Mystery, a bondsman to Romance ;
My days as in a dream go by, my nights as in a trance.
I haunt a magic universe exclusively mine own,
And sights of earth and sounds of earth to me are barely
known.

Dim shapes along the busy Strand flit onward in a flood :
I deem them only airy things, not formed in flesh and blood.
What boots it that I *deem* them so ?—It makes me cry almost
When I reveal this bitter fact ;—I've never seen a Ghost !

I read no trite or vulgar books, no scientific lore ;
But court the supernatural that thrills me to the core.
The pulseless novels of the hour to children I resign ;
Let "Frankenstein," "Zanoni," and "Le Juif Errant" be *mine*.
The tales of Mr. Maturin by heart I nearly know,
And those of Wilkie Collins and of Edgar Allen Poe ;
Monk Lewis, Mrs. Radcliffe, and their fellows by the host :—
My labour's only thrown away ;—I've never seen a Ghost !

The course of diet I pursue is frightfully unfit
For man, for woman, or for child ;—that's why I follow it.
One apparition—only one—was all my end and aim ;
But, though I waited night by night, no apparition came.

On chops and sausages of pork what suppers have I made !
What ghastly heaps of apple-pie, to lure the kindly shade !
Welsh rarebits have I revelled in, on thickly-buttered toast ;—
But, though they cost me agonies, I've never seen a Ghost !

I know 'tis rarely they appear 'mid London's giddy din,
But seek the ivied manor house or haunt the lonely inn ;
And on the stroke of twelve o'clock—"the very witching
time"—

Reveal some deeply-hidden hoard or nigh-forgotten crime.
But I have braved the lonely inn, the ivied manor house,
And suffered but a single fright :—methinks 'twas but a mouse.
I vainly sought around my bed for shapes in ev'ry post ;
But, nonsense !—nothing of the kind ;—I've never seen a Ghost !

Why east and west upon my quest unhaunted should I go ?
Some people see them ev'ry night—at least they tell me so.
(I've often heard my grandmamma describe a ghost she had—
A lovely one, with saucer eyes, that sent her nearly mad.)
Alas ! my efforts all are lost ; my life is thrown away.
I've little now to brag about upon my dying day.
Whatever few advantages are left for me to boast,
One blot will cancel all of them ;—I've never seen a Ghost !





PUTTING IT OFF.

IN Wintertime I first began
To court you, Annie dear ;
And breathed, as lovers only can,
Soft nothings in that ear.
I dreamed about you half the night,
I wooed you half the day.
In sunny hopes, in visions bright,
The Winter passed away.

'Twas in the Springtime, Annie dear,
You swore to be my bride.
The latter days of March were here,
The hour was eventide.
You begged a very brief delay—
A month, or little more,
But, ere you named the happy day,
The Spring, alas, was o'er !

In Summertime I bravely dared,
Dear Annie, to suggest
That, if we thought of getting paired,
That season was the best.
What bliss to hail the merry morn
That made you all my own !
But while I lingered, still forlorn,
I found the Summer flown.

September brings the Autumn here,
The leaves begin to fall.
Full soon upon the landscape drear
Will Winter spread its pall.
In gloom I sit, with solemn phiz,
A moody single man,
Whose only consolation is
That you're a spinster, Anne !





EARLY IMPRESSIONS.

I COMMENCED my education as a boy of under five,
With a bright imagination, and a fancy all alive.
What a stare was on my visage, as I listened while my nurse
Would indulge me with her narratives, in prose or pretty verse!
I am grown a little older—and a little bigger too,
And I know, perhaps, a little more than children ever do;
But I daily feel a longing to become a boy again,
And with open ears to marvel at the tales of Emma Jane.

She was good in Humpty Dumpty, and she gave me such a
shock

With a story which assured me that a mouse ran up a clock;
She could sing a song of sixpence in so natural a way,
That the four-and-twenty blackbirds I can hear again to-day.
Then an urchin in a corner plucked a treasure from a pie,
And announced the act of prowess by a laudatory cry;
While the lion beat the unicorn with all his might and mane,
Till he drove him to the suburbs, as I heard from Emma Jane.

She was great about Aladdin, and his Genius of the Lamp,
And his wild magician uncle, whom I thought an utter scamp.
Then the palace I remember, so exceptionally grand,
Which was built a little quicker than the Law Courts in the
Strand.

Cinderella with her slipper was a darling and a duck,
And I had a way of wishing twelve o'clock had never struck.
Evermore in her adventures a delight shall I retain,
Quite as fresh as when they thrilled me from the lips of Emma
Jane.

Ali Baba haunts my slumbers ; even yet my bosom heaves
When I ponder on the turpitudes that stained the Forty
Thieves.

But I gloated on the triumphs of the giant-killing Jack,
With a bounding in my bosom, but a shudder down my back.
How minutely have I followed the career of Puss in Boots !
How my ringlets by Red Riding Hood were stirred among the
roots !

What a joy it was to linger (half in pleasure, half in pain)
On the legends everlasting of my faithful Emma Jane.

In the schools of many masters have I studied many things,
And exhausted Hume and Smollett on the line of British
kings.

Of our Tudors and Plantagenets what crammers have been
told,

And of Saxons and of Normans in the foggy days of old.

Hume and Smollett were too credulous ; I would not give a
straw

For the folks who try to write about events they never saw.

When they ask me to believe them, they appeal to me in vain,

But my faith is never-dying in my dear old Emma Jane.

(Published, with the author's music, by Mr. JOSEPH WILLIAMS, 24,
Berners Street).





CRESCENDO.

TURN, Angelina, turn to hear
My very last appeal.
You scarce appreciate, I fear,
The passion that I feel.
To love me *long* might be a task
Too painful to essay,
So, Lina, try—'tis all I ask—
To love me for a day.

I have my merits, after all—
Those merits don't forget ;
My brain, perchance, is pretty small,
But might be smaller yet.
Two foreign tongues in chatty style
I fluently can speak ;
Then strive, my Lina, strive awhile
To love me for a week.

In banishment my life would be
The dreariest of blanks ;
Your hapless Edwin could you see
A private in the ranks ?
Yet I will join—and this I swear—
The *Fighting Onety-Onth*,
Unless, my Lina, you prepare
To love me for a month.

Yet wherefore shall I tempt my fate,
And brave the battle-field ?
That heart will soften soon or late,
And only longs to yield.
Fair lady, to my tender lay
Incline one willing ear ;
Attempt, my Lina, whilst you may,
To love me for a year.

You blush, you sigh. Ah, happy day !
My prayer, I know, is heard ;
No longer turn that head away,
But breathe one little word.
Yes, yes, my Lina, be my own—
My queen, my bride, my wife ;
Renounce the world for me alone,
And love me all your life.





WAITING FOR AN ANSWER.

WHERE are now my sprightly fancies
That were once in easy call,
Building up untold romances
Out of bricks however small?
Sad they left me here behind them
When they melted into air;
Echo, tell me where to find them!
Echo answers only, "Where?"

Why repines my soul within me
For a time too dear to last?
Why will ne'er my spirit win me
From these broodings o'er the past?
Cease, my tears! I cannot stop them;
Cannot seek their source to dry.
Echo, tell me why I drop them!
Echo answers only, "Why?"

When will Joy and Peace together—
Pitying this eternal strife—
Cast a ray of soft spring weather
O'er the autumn of my life?
Hope (like any wild bee humming)
Murmurs, "Care would quit you *then*."
Echo, tell me when 'tis coming!
Echo answers only, "When?"

How can aught of earth allure me,
 Aught provoke my hollow smile;
 Boasting of its power to cure me
 Of my wretchedness awhile?
 What is Mirth? I ne'er could woo it
 As I woo Despondence now.
 Echo, tell me how to do it!
 Echo answers only, "How?"

Nymph, you surely wish to mock me—
 Such replies are none at all;
 I declare you rather shock me
 With a joke so very small.
 Better 'twere to leave me lonely
 In the darkness of despair,
 If you mean to answer only
 "How" and "why" and "when" and "where."





A "GUSHER."

I WOULD not be a leaf to die ;
Nor yet a rose to fade away ;
Nor yet the gaudy butterfly,
That only sees one summer day.
No ; let my placid years extend
As far, we'll say, as ninety-five ;
Then calmly will I greet my end.
It's very nice to be alive.

My fellow-men I love to meet.
Yes ; every day that glides along,
In busy square or noisy street,
I seek their sympathetic throng ;
And while for pleasure, wealth, or fame,
They pant and struggle, push and strive,
I slily watch the giddy game.
'Tis jolly fun to be alive.

A tree or flow'r, a hill or vale,
A babbling brook or shady lane,
In after hours will never fail
To bring their beauty back again.
How sweetly calm a country walk !
How calmly sweet a country drive !
Hush, gloomy cynic, cease your talk !
'Tis joy intense to be alive.

To-day the smoke, the dust, the din ;
To-morrow peace and sunny skies.
I neither know nor care a pin
Where most of earthly pleasure lies ;
But *this* I know : I mean to live
As long as I can well contrive.
My wild and wayward wish forgive ;
'Tis *life* to me to be alive !





GOING TO SLEEP.

LET the taper be brought me ! I'll saunter to rest.
It is *twelve* by St. Mary-le-Strand.
By my day's heavy labour no longer opprest,
My relief and repose are at hand.
I can slumber supine in ten minutes or less—
After silently closing my door,
And locating the manifold parts of my dress
In a mountainous heap on the floor.

What a blessing to bask in this Eden, and muse
(Amid sheets of a pure snowy white),
Where no toils and no troubles can come to confuse
Placid sentiments born of the night !
To reflect, in a mild, metaphysical vein,
While the stars from yon firmament peep !
But the chimes of Saint Mary's are at it again—
It is *one* ! Let me get me to sleep.

There's a magic in sleep. It has quaintly been said
That it "wraps a man up like a cloak."
(Which is one of the truest remarks that I've read,
Though 'twas probably meant as a joke).

And the sweet Swan of Avon, in *Henry the Fourth*,
Hath some similes equally new.
There's a clang, there's a clamour ! The wind's in the north,
And Saint Mary proclaims that it's *two* !

Were I stung by my conscience, or bodily pain—
The neuralgia, perchance, or the gout—
The unpleasant occurrence would amply explain
All my writhings and rollings about.
But, though tranquil in spirits and scatheless in frame,
Not a chance of one wink do I see.
There's another dread summons—by Jove, what a shame !
Who'd have thought it ? That clock has gone *three* !

There's a charm about brooding on figures, I think ;
Yes, I heard of it ages ago.
Into dreams of delight you unwittingly sink
When you've counted a million or so.
I will try it. " One, two ; " yes, it soothes you, no doubt
But I've come to eight hundred and more ;
And the bells of Saint Mary's are still crying out,
And the hour that they mention is *four* !

Though that remedy failed I can find other means
My long vigil to cheer and beguile ;
I will sum up in order the kings and the queens
That have reigned o'er this tight little isle.
There was William the First—I can surely contrive
To remember the next on the roll.
But, no matter—Saint Mary insists that it's *five* !
I'll get up and go out for a stroll.



GETTING UP.

HAVE you brought my boots, Jemima? Leave them at my chamber-door.

Does the water boil, Jemima? Place it also on the floor.
Eight o'clock already, is it? How's the weather; pretty fine?
Eight is tolerably early; I can get away by nine.
Still I feel a little sleepy, though I came to bed at one.
Put the bacon on, Jemima; see the eggs are nicely done!
I'll be down in twenty minutes—or, if possible, in less;
I shall not be long, Jemima, when I once begin to dress.

She is gone, the brisk Jemima; she is gone, and little thinks
How the sluggard yearns to capture yet another forty winks.
Since the bard is human only—not an early village cock—
Why should he salute the morning at the hour of eight o'clock?
Stiffled be the voice of Duty; Prudence, prythee cease to
chide;
While I turn me softly, gently, round upon my other side.
Sleep, resume thy downy empire; reassert thy sable reign!
Morpheus, why desert a fellow? Bring those poppies here
again!

What's the matter *now*, Jemima? Nine o'clock? It cannot
be!

Hast prepared the eggs, the bacon, and the matutinal tea?
Take away the jug, Jemima. Go, replenish it anon;
Since the charm of its caloric must be very nearly gone.

She has left me. Let me linger till she re-appears again.
Let my lazy thoughts meander in a free and easy vein.
After Sleep's profounder solace, naught refreshes like the doze.
Should I tumble off, no matter : she will wake me, I suppose.

Bless me, is it *you*, Jemima? Mercy on us, what a knock !
Can it be—I can't believe it—actually ten o'clock ?
I will out of bed and shave me. Fetch me warmer water up !
Let the tea be strong, Jemima. I shall only want a cup.
Stop a minute ! I remember some appointment, by-the-way.
'Twould have brought me mints of money : 'twas for ten
o'clock to-day.
Let me drown my disappointment, Slumber, in thy seventh
heaven !
You may go away, Jemima. Come and call me at eleven !





A SIGH FROM THE STALLS.

AS oft as I saunter at eve to the play
 (Where I saunter as oft as I please)
They present me a pass, in their affable way,
 To inhabit the stalls at mine ease.
Now and then—in the waits—with a brow overcast
 In regretful abstraction I sit,
Looking back to the days—or the nights—of my past,
 When I paid second-price to the pit.

Sometimes—thither bound by my duties, of course—
 I behold a new comedy played.
When the wags and the critics have mustered in force
 It is quite an impressive parade.
But they hint, one and all, that the dialogue drags,
 And they tell me 'tis wanting in wit.
I was not in the world of your critics and wags
 When I paid second-price to the pit.

Mine oar at the galleys of Commerce I tugged
 From a Monday till Saturday came.
(Though a slave I was happy: 'twas long e're I hugged
 Any dreams of ambition or fame.)
And I ever felt seized on the Saturday night
 With my weekly theatrical fit,
I was filled—I was thrilled—with a throb of delight
 When I paid second-price to the pit.

One fact I remember—the saddest of facts !—

In a tragedy such as *Macbeth*,

I could only enjoy its two ultimate acts,

And be in at the murderer's death.

Did I ever complain of a matter so small?

Did I ever object?—Not a bit.

'Twas a favour, thought I, to see *any at all*,

When I paid second-price to the pit.

I feel that when youth and its pleasures depart

It is useless, or worse, to repine ;

To bewail the glad years when a freshness of heart

And a lightness of spirit were mine.

Yet, my reader, you must not account it a crime —

When those years through my mem'ry may flit —

If I dawdle in rhyme o'er the far-away time

When I paid second-price to the pit.





CHEERFUL !

GO, bid the rain from yonder cloud
In dense and steady streams descend.
Request the thunder, fiercely loud,
The welkin with its roar to rend.
Across yon dreary vault above,
Go bid the lightning-flashes play.
The conflict of the storm I love ;
I would not, if I could, be gay.

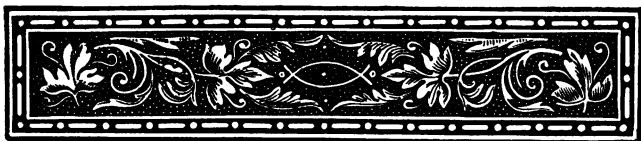
Then bring me books of tragic tone,
Eclipsing Edgar Allen Poe ;
That I may read them all alone,
By one dull taper sinking low.
Grim, ghastly tales of woe and crime
Shall share my loneliness to-day ;
E'en thus will I beguile my time—
I would not, if I could, be gay.

Or let my bell's incessant clang
Harsh creditors in crowds proclaim,
While madly at my knocker bang
Dread bores with Legion for their name.
Let angry duns on oath declare
They mean to sue unless I pay,
While idiots talk me to despair ;
I would not, if I could, be gay.

Then let my frame be direly racked
With aches and pains full sore to bear ;—
With all the maladies, in fact,
To which our human flesh is heir.
Let fell Neuralgia mount her throne,
And Gout assert its dreaded sway,
While cramps extort the sigh or groan ;
I would not, if I could, be gay.

There are who find their only joys
In wine or jests, in dance or song.
I say to Laughter, "Hold your noise!"
I cry to Gladness, "Get along!"
I wish to spend my stay on earth
In quite my own peculiar way.
Let youth and folly cling to mirth ;
I would not, if I could, be gay.





A LOST HOUR.

LEFT alone with my paper, my pens, and my ink,
In my slippers and work-a-day coat,
I'm in lyrical vein—and the public, I think,
Would be charmed could it read what I wrote.
Yet my Pegasus falters and slackens its pace,
While my thoughts with my eyes run astray.
Both my thoughts and my eyes are intent on the face
Of that pretty girl over the way.

To yon casement or lattice—whiche'er it may be—
Once a minute my glances I raise
('Tis an opposite window, betwixt you and me,
That unceasingly rivets my gaze.)
And she sits there and reads a new novel, no doubt,
Or a highly sensational play ;
While I dream at my desk and look lazily out
At that pretty girl over the way.

What a sweet pair of eyes ! What a soft sunny smile !
What a splendour of bonny brown hair !
A Saint Antony swiftly those lips would beguile ;
A Saint Kevin those cheeks would ensnare.
Not a painter could hope with his colours to trace—
Not a bard with his verse to portray
The unspeakable charm and ineffable grace
Of that pretty girl over the way.

Yet I dare not indulge in such visions, alas !
I've a troublesome task to fulfil ;
And the merciless minutes too rapidly pass,
And keep drying the ink in my quill.
I resolved on beginning my rhymes long ago ;
I repent of this idle delay.
Not another sly peep will I deign to bestow
On that pretty girl over the way.

Nay, I cannot be comic by hook or by crook ;
And should strive to be solemn in vain.
I am fit but for one thing on earth ; 'tis to look
At those exquisite features again.
With my heart on the opposite side of the street,
Not a line shall escape me to-day—
Save the present poor stanzas I cast at the feet
Of that pretty girl over the way.





AT MY TOILET.

I'M to meet my Matilda to-night
At a dance up in Mornington Crescent ;
My heart's overflowing, yet light,
And my spirits are quite effervescent.
I long to be looking my best
When I first catch the eye of my dearest ;
Oh ! let me be daintily drest—
Though my wardrobe is one of the queerest.

My Matilda confides, I believe,
In the depth of my soul's adoration ;
Yet, possibly, pa may conceive
That a clerk's is a mean avocation.
Pooh, pooh ! I possess common sense,
Am industrious, honest, and saving.
(Time flies—but I could not commence
Till I got my hot water for shaving.)

I may win from the charmer, perchance,
A reply, should I plead pretty boldly ;
A whisper, no doubt, or a glance
Given slily but not given coldly.

(These old patent-leathers have cracked
 In a most inexcusable manner.
 Would any one credit the fact
 That they cost seventeen and a tanner ?)

There be hearts that are trafficked for gold,
 Where affection at zero is reckoned.
 Shall one like Matilda's be sold ?—
 (There's a brace-button flown in a second !)
 Why should not the worship of pelf
 By Morality's laws be forbidden ?
 (My studs, which I left on the shelf,
 Have been either walked off with or hidden.)

My career I would gladly devote
 The career of Matilda to sharing.
 (I wish that my swallow-tailed coat
 Were a shade better fitted for wearing).
 Her father, I fear, like a churl,
 Only looks at the cents and the dollars.
 (I've waited an hour for that girl
 To come back from the wash with my collars.)

It is pouring ! I cannot well ride,
 As my pockets I've scarcely one rap in.
 I look none the better, beside,
 For this wound on my chin from the Mappin.
 I'll give up the dance, I protest,
 And my efforts at brilliant adorning :
 By gaslight I'm not at my best,
 Though I look very nice in the morning.



LONELY.

MY cherished lyre, I sweep again
With digits wan thy thrilling chords ;
I seek the joy akin to pain,
The bliss that only woe affords.
I love betimes to sit and brood
(While drops the tear from either eye)
In silence and in solitude—
I cannot state precisely *why* !

In youth, when all the skies were clear,
When life was like a sunny dream,
How pleasant was the task to steer
My gallant bark adown the stream !
But storms, alas ! have gathered round ;
No more the helm obeys me now ;
My fickle shallop ran aground—
I cannot guess exactly *how* !

Too happy time ! ere Love's eclipse
Had bowed my form and bleached my hair,
Her azure eyes and ruby lips
Were all my hope and all my care !
But ruby lips and azure eyes
Were doomed alike to be untrue ;
Another came to snatch my prize—
I cannot quite remember *who* !

True Friendship hath a flame sincere,
That even Time can rarely cool ;
And friends are ever doubly dear
Who date from days of grammar school.
Ah, Smith ! couldst thou ignore the claims
Of early ties to such a pitch ?
You've swindled me, or called me names—
I cannot swear distinctly *which* !

Lost, lost the hopes that once were mine ;
Far flown is ev'ry fond belief ;
I rather love to sit and pine
Beside my lyre in lonely grief.
Here, swanlike, let me singing die.
The poet's final home prepare ;
And, when I leave you, let me lie—
I cannot fix this minute *where* !





A TRUE PATRIOT.

HOW bright the skies of Albion are,
That beamed upon my birth !
To me they seem serener far
Than any skies on earth.
How sweet their soft and sunny smile
As, radiant in their glee,
They float above the favoured isle
That sways the stormy sea !
Rule, Britannia, rule the waves :
Britons never will be slaves !

The homes that harbour English heads
Are castles, each and all ;
No foe the Anglo-Saxon dreads
While housed in castle hall.
But should your freeman fail to pay
The taxes or the rent,
He will at once near Holloway
To durance vile be sent.
Rule, Britannia, rule the waves :
Britons never will be slaves !

I own a fondly faithful wife,
And eke a lively boy ;
But things occur in wedded life
That yield me little joy.

My spouse is crying half the day,
My baby half the night
(And yet the married state, they say,
Is one of calm delight).
Rule, Britannia, rule the waves :
Britons never will be slaves !

One day *per* week I set apart,
Like hundreds of my kind,
To cultivate my love of art,
And polish up my mind.
Yet no museum yields a show
On Sabbath afternoons ;
And Hampton Court is far to go
For pictures or cartoons.
Rule, Britannia, rule the waves :
Britons never will be slaves !

'Tis not a merry thing to pass
A sultry "Sunday out,"
And pine three hours without a glass
Of bitter ale or stout.
Although I love my Fatherland,
And hold her fondly dear,
Let Albion clearly understand
I won't give up my Beer !
Rule, Britannia, rule the waves :
Britons never will be slaves !





THE CONVALESCENT COCKNEY.

THE air, the air, the open air !
Its breath can lull the throb of care.
To languor strength, to torment ease,
Are wafted in the balmy breeze.
With joy I quit my second floor,
And close with glee my outer door.
No jot of past or present pain
Afflicts me now. I'm out again !

For many a week, from day to day,
While prisoned in my sheets I lay,
I watched upon my chamber-wall
The light and shadow rise or fall.
This morn the sovran sun is bright ;
No shadow comes to dim its light.
The sky is all its own domain.
Smile, kingly orb. I'm out again !

How yonder church recalls the time
When yonder clock's recurring chime
Told how the dreary day grew on,
Or when the weary night was gone !
Just now it seems a boon so dear
To *see* the hours as well as *hear*.
There sounds a welcome in your strain ;
Ring, merry bells. I'm out again !

And I may rove, no matter where,
Through busy street or quiet square,
And greet, for just a little space,
My fellow-creature face to face.
I meet him healthy, strong, serene,
Quite unaware how ill I've been.
I'll raise my hat (he can't complain),
"Good-morrow, friend. I'm out again!"

The park of saintly James invites
This errant gaze to calm delights ;
There cows lactiferously mild
Give solace to the thirsty child.
There Phyllis and her Strephon stray,
And spoon the fleeting hours away.
Hail, happy nymph and happy swain !
Keep spooning on. I'm out again !

Nay, let me seek Trafalgar Square,
And woo the wanton zephyrs there !
(Undoubtedly 'twere better far
To call it Plaza Traf-al-gar.)
Here cherub-like aloft I see
Horatio Nelson, K.C.B. ;
Heroic visions fire my brain,
And stir my pulse. I'm out again !

But stay ! Did Fancy lead me forth
To ramble south or wander north ?
I cannot settle which were best,
A pilgrimage to east or west.
No matter ; journey where I may,
It can't be said I've lost a day.
I'm free as air—I've burst my chain.
Hip, hip, hooray ! I'm out again !



AN AWFUL WARNING.

A SOBER set of six were we, who journeyed underground.
From Kew or Hammersmith we hailed, and Cityward
were bound.

The talk veered ever and anon from politics to trade,
And weighty topics in finance we tackled undismayed.
Aggressive grew our arguments, conflicting grew our views,
For one would quote *The Telegraph* and one *The Daily News*.
Yet no unseemly brawl occurred, or symptoms of a fight,
For sons of commerce—as a rule—will bark, but never bite.

Sedately gay we steamed away, and half the trip was o'er,
When, lo! a youth invaded us, of twenty-three or four.
His coat was but of yestermorn, his boots were of to-day,
His hat, refulgent in the gas, returned its ev'ry ray.
He taciturnly overheard our comments on the stocks,
As if within its *faucibus* had *hesit*-ed his *vox*.
Three-quarters of the way were sped before the stranger spoke,
And *then*—conceive our horror, please—*the stranger made a
joke!*

One heaved a sigh—another coughed—the third grew ghastly
pale,
A fourth attempted with a smile his gathered wrath to veil.
Then, seeing Number Five collapse, I all at once began
To take the stranger into tow and warn that wretched man.

The grandeur of Demosthenes was high above my reach,
 The late lamented Cicero could floor me at a speech ;
 No matter—noble was my cause, and pure was my intent.
 The voice of Duty urged me on, so straightway on I went.

“Perchance, fond youth,” said I, in tones appropriately stern,
 “Thy loving mother sits at home and sighs for thy return.
 Thou hast a father, probably, who recks not of the shame
 One moment’s giddy prank may cast upon thy honoured name.
 Thy sister lives—thy brother too—thine uncle and thine
 aunt—

Thou hast the varied luxuries that Opulence may grant.
 Come, tell me, favourite of Chance ! come, Fortune’s chosen
 one !

Say, wast thou only petted thus *to perpetrate a pun ?* ”

“A pun, you tell me, only counts among the minor sins ;
 But who can trace aright the place where wickedness begins ?
 The germs of evil, giddy boy, seem trifles at the time,
 But oft the tiny seed begets the lofty tree of crime.
 Beware, beware, the simple play upon the simple word !
 I knew a youth—but shall I dare to mention what occurred ?
 The traitor to his mother-tongue will oftentimes conclude
 By working out a long career of penal servitude.”

The smile had left his boyish face ; the cloud was on his brow
 He looked—I cannot undertake to say exactly *how*.
 I scanned the features of my friends ; but three were in a
 snooze,

And one devoured *The Telegraph* and one *The Daily News*.
 My tale is done. That little trip took place a year ago.
 ’Tis rarely that I think of it ; but this I chance to know :—
 My fervour and my eloquence were not employed in vain.
 That youth is now another man. *He never punned again !*



A PROPOSAL.

OBJECT of my tender passion,
Sit you here beside me, please—
(I reject the silly fashion
Of proposing on the knees.)
'Tis but half-a-dozen questions—
Which we soon can hurry through;—
Followed by a few suggestions
Which—but this is *entre nous* !

If I to the altar bore you,
Both our lives to intertwine,
Would a thrill of joy come o'er you
At the words that made you mine?
As you say, I'm not a beauty;
Still this heart is ever true.
Should you try to do your duty
When—but this is *entre nous* !

If I made you Mrs. Rogers,
Could we calmly settle down,
As a pair of lowly lodgers
Up in lowly Somers Town?
With a salary so shady,
Sha'n't I have enough to do
To support you like a lady,
If—but this is *entre nous* !

Life would glide without a ripple ;
Calmly would the current flow.
('Tis a bore to be a cripple ;
Still 'twas Nature made me so.)
I am prudent, I am thrifty,
I am barely sixty-two.
You yourself are over fifty,
And—but this is *entre nous* !

Come, you know I love you dearly,
And would love you all my life,
Truly—tenderly—sincerely—
Could I win you for my wife.
But how vain is my devotion '—
I am wedded, so are you ;
Yet I seem to have a notion
That—but this is *entre nous* !





THE BELLE OF THE ARCADE.

HOW delicious you looked when I met you
In all the enchantment of youth !
I believed that I ne'er could forget you,
And think I believed but the truth.
Not a care for the past or the morrow
Then clouded your innocent brow ;
But, I own, with a heart full of sorrow,
'Tis painful to look at you *now*.

Your complexion has totally faded,
Your eyes cannot answer the spring ;
And your tresses the dust has invaded,
You poor little, weak little thing.
In your muslin and frills—they were smarter
When first your frail form they arrayed—
From the morn till the night like a martyr
You pine in the Lowther Arcade.

Are you madly though silently longing
In hope of a home and of rest ?
Are the dreams of a purchaser thronging
All day through your bran-padded breast ?
When I stroll by the shop and behold you
Neglected and wearing away,
"It is time your proprietors sold you,"
Is all that I plaintively say.

You may better e'en yet your condition—
Unless 'tis already too late—
And an aristocratic position
May possibly fall to your fate.
Ev'ry pleasure that wealth can secure you
Perchance at your feet may be laid ;
Which would be a relief, I assure you,
From life in the Lowther Arcade.

You may hit—more by luck than by merit—
The taste of some nice little girl,
Who has lately been born to inherit
The coin and estates of an earl.
She will beat you sometimes in a passion,
And pull out your hair in a pet :
But you'll see a lot more of "the fashion"
Than ever you looked upon yet.

After all, there are many poor dollies
As anxious as you to be sold :
Not the least of the world's little follies
Consists in the worship of gold.
It is ever the same bitter story
Of riches—of beauty—of trade ;
And Mayfair at the height of its glory
Is much like the Lowther Arcade.





A HAPPY FAMILY.

IN Suffolk Street I daily see
An entertaining exhibition,
Where each performer seems to me
To occupy a false position.
Some rather lively little mice,
A cat, and three or four canaries,
Amuse me, at a paltry price,
With sundry comical vagaries.

My optics on the show I feast,
And thus revive the admiration
That I profess for ev'ry beast
And ev'ry bird in all creation.
They rank below the human race,
And yet they bear a charm about them
So potent, that in any place
My life would be a blank without them.

My terror mounts beyond control—
Although I strive to overcome it—
Whene'er a mouse ascends a pole
To pluck the standard from the summit.
And when secure he reaches earth,
I trust it will not seem improper
If, shedding tears amid my mirth,
I hand the man an extra copper.

Those birds, that fondly I admire,
Are all so pretty, all so clever,
That I could ardently desire
To gaze upon their pranks for ever.
Yon cat, so very slim and sleek—
The emblem of repose and quiet—
Has evidently grown so meek
Upon a vegetable diet.

Here, showman, is your stock-in-trade ;
And, though you treat it pretty kindly,
The laws of nature, I'm afraid,
You break, although you do it blindly.
'Tis most irreverent, you see,
Illogically thus to treat them ;
For birds and mice, we all agree,
Were only made for cats to eat them.





TO MY HOUSEMAID.

A CRY OF ANGUISH.

THIS will never do, Jemima. Clearly this will never do !
Let me put the matter frankly—*I* must get away, or *you*.
Vanish ! I insist upon it. Leave my den and me alone.
(Pray excuse me if I wound you by my rather angry tone.)
Yes, I see the crust of ages on the surface of my chairs :
I behold a paper chaos grown around me unawares.
Your domesticated optic obviously abhors the sight :
Mine *prefers* a crusty chaos. Hence, away ; I wish to write.

Know you not I hate a duster—know you not I loathe a broom—

When it seeks to break the silence of my lone back sitting-room ?

'Tis the *sanctum* of the Muses ; here I build the lofty rhyme,
Ev'ry morning before my luncheon—then again till dinner time.

Here I quaff my Aganippe, here my Helicon I swill !
Here I mount my own Parnassus, pine and laurel-covered hill.
Would you hither stray to “fidget”—wasting all my precious time—

If you only knew, Jemima, what a hill it is to climb

Other duties are before you—else I very much mistake.
Have you never bells to answer? Are there never beds to
make?

Has the butcher been for orders? Hark, was that a knock
below?

Take away the broom, Jemima. Pick your duster up and go.
I forgive you this intrusion. Cleanliness is not a crime ;
Still, I fain would have its revels practised at some other time.
If in all my mother-lingo there be any words I hate,
They are found in two expressions—"clearing up" and "setting
straight."

Think me not a foe to order ; count me not a slave to dirt—
(If you judge me thus, Jemima, I shall be extremely hurt.)
There's a method in my madness, though unhinged my brain
you deem,

Trust me, I am not so brutal or so loathsome as I seem.
I've arranged yon mass of papers in my own peculiar way.
I can find one in a minute. Wherefore make me waste a
day?

If you think my chairs are grimy (as I've not a doubt you *do*)
Don't imagine, I implore you, that my thoughts are grimy too.

I am now and then, Jemima, prone to meditative mood ;
Partial, I may say, to basking in the bliss of solitude.
While I weave the dainty dactyl, or the flowing anapaest,
I must be alone, I tell you, unannoyed by man or beast.
If you saw me count my digits, if you saw me bite my quill,
Might you not be justly doubtful of my fluency or skill ?
Let me only linger lonely in the "luxury of woe."
Mind you shut the door behind you. Get away, Jemima—*Go !*



NOT MUCH.

I KNEW that Love and Hope were frail,
But never entertained a notion
That I should illustrate the tale
Of Woman's wiles and Man's devotion.
Despair, with one terrific blow,
Has bowled me over like a skittle.
It seems but half-an-hour ago
Since I adored her—just a little.

How oft we stole the furtive walk
In streets adjoining Piccadilly—
When Passion prompted all my talk,
And made my talk intensely silly !
Of things we said and vows we swore
I scarcely recollect a tittle ;
She blushed confessions o'er and o'er,
Till I believed her—just a little.

A hated rival crossed my path,
And seized the false and fickle rover ;
I might have slain him in my wrath,
But he was two yards high and over.
My joys are dead ; my dreams are fled,
Like bubbles bright, but, ah ! so brittle ;
And yet I only wrote and said
That I despised her—just a little.



STANZAS

(ON READING "I'D BE A BUTTERFLY.")

I WOULD not be a butterfly—
Nay, Mr. Bayly, nay ;
Although you rhyme to ear and eye
In such a dainty way,
Those pretty words, that pretty air,
Admit but one reply ;—
Indeed, sir, I should hardly care
To be a butterfly.

A charm there lies in being born
Within a rosy bow'r,
Where sunshine on a summer morn
Should grace my natal hour.
But I was born a Cockney, sir :—
A Cockney I shall die.
Pray, why on earth should I prefer
To be a butterfly ?

The plants that in a garden grow
Are fresh and very sweet ;
But more befitting for a show
Than proper things to eat.

STRAINS FROM THE STRAND.

I love my soup, I love my fish,
My joint and apple-pie ;
My *menu* never makes me wish
To be a butterfly.

'Tis only just a month or so
The things can keep alive ;—
One year's career they cannot know,
And mine are forty-five.
I hope to earn a little fame
Ere many more go by.
It scarce will suit my little game
To be a butterfly.

I tell you frankly, Mr. B.,
I would not, if I could ;—
In fact, as far as I can see,
I could not if I would.
To many things we all aspire,
For many things we sigh ;
But how can mortal man desire
To be a butterfly ?





AN ANSWER.

TO MY MOTHER-IN-LAW.

MOTHER, dear, we got your letter ;
 It was long, but very nice.
What could possibly be better
 Than your heaps of good advice ?
Need I say it gave me pleasure,
 When my Florry read it through ?
None can tell how much we treasure
 Such a dear old pet as you !

'Tis no fond illusion, is it,
 (Best of beings, answer *No.*)
That we may expect your visit
 In about a week or so ?
Rapture ! We shall be in clover
 All the while that you are here.
Can't you stop a month, or over ?
 Answer quickly, mother dear !

Ere the honeymoon was ended
 (Happy month—'twas ever May !)
Florry and myself intended
 Asking you to come and stay.

STRAINS FROM THE STRAND.

In a close confabulation
We were striving how to frame
Lines of pressing invitation,
When your kind epistle came.

Both of us are happy, mother ;
Happy as the day is long ;
Oh, so fond of one another,
Far from Fashion's giddy throng.
Still, our life is rather lonely,
In our tranquil suburb here ;
You could wake us up, if only
Just a little, mother, dear !

You shall saunter with us daily
On the lawn and on the lea ;
Or shall sit and prattle gaily
In the shade, beneath a tree.
Should the skies be unpropitious,
Cards will while away the time ;
Single dummy is delicious,
Penny points are not a crime.

When may we prepare to greet you ?
Tell us, for we long to hear.
(Could we send a cab to meet you
At the station, mother, dear ?)
Drop at once a line to Florry
(Pillar-box—not after five) ;
I should be intensely sorry
To be out when you arrive !



HERE WE ARE AGAIN!

I RECOLLECT—full well I do—
That, in my life's remoter times
I felt aggrieved when sitting through
The openings of the pantomimes.
Their puns could never make me smile ;
Their dances and their songs were vain ;
I sat awaiting all the while
The wished-for " Here we are again ! "

I scarcely watched one gallant fight
Young Jack the Giant-Killer waged ;
The tale began to bore me quite—
My mind was far away engaged.
The welcome end came by and by ;
The giants all were duly slain ;
The transformation-scene was nigh,
And with it " Here we are again ! "

It mattered not a fig to *me*
What Cinderella said or did ;
I fancied Whittington to be
A most intrusive little kid.
Whatever incidents occurred
I treated with a cool disdain ;
For nothing touched me till I heard
The cry of " Here we are again ! "

STRAINS FROM THE STRAND.

Mad wag, to childhood ever dear !
No moral qualms thy life perplexed ;
Thine only maxim, it is clear,
Was "bismuth first, and pleasure next."
And Pleasure brimmed for thee a cup
With no alloying drop of pain.
What worlds of mirth it conjured up—
Thy magic "Here we are again !"

Thy figure, too—how boldly quaint !
Thy wide and theft-impelling hose ;
And what profusely-scattered paint
Besmirched the brow, the cheek, the nose !
Forget thee, merriest of mimes ?
Nay—long as Mem'ry shall remain,
Its pow'r shall bring me oftentimes
Thine olden "Here we are again !"





HYMEN IN NUBIBUS.

WHEN an ugly and elderly bachelor marries
A maiden as youthful as fair,
'Tis a crime which—according to Sheridan—carries
A penalty dreadful to bear.
In a whisper I fain would have breathed my confession,
Though here I reveal it aloud.
Let me own, with a sorrow that baffles expression,
My honeymoon's under a cloud.

On a morn of the brightest and balmiest weather,
I made my affianced my wife,
'Twas a day, I may say, that appeared altogether
The sweetest of days in my life.
Woe is me; what an army of glad recollections
To-night on my memory crowd!
Where are *now* my lost hopes and my blighted affections?
My honeymoon's under a cloud.

For our songsters and poets it seems very clever
And highly pathetic to talk
Of two hearts that are beating in unison ever—
Two cherries that grow on one stalk.

I've a nature as mild and as meek as a kidling's,
A nature of which to be proud ;
But I fancy my wife's will be ranked with the middlings.
My honeymoon's under a cloud.

It is anguish in less than a month to discover,
And agony thus to record,
That the heart which could throb day or night for a lover
Ne'er throbs for a master and lord.
I am losing my rest and my health and my temper ;
And—though I cling fast, as I vowed,
To the words of my motto, *Fidelis* and *Semper*—
My honeymoon's under a cloud.





BALLAD.

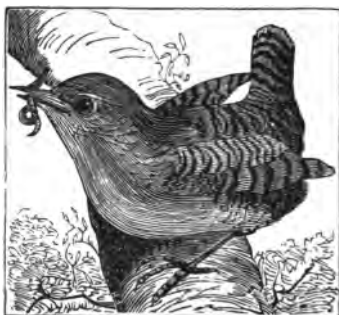
ONCE more the Spring the Summer greets—
The month is merry May ;
And Nature with her many sweets
Adorns the sunny day.
Once more the bloom is on the rye ;
The rose is here again.
The birds are warbling in the sky ;—
But where is Betsy Jane ?

Yon emmets, in their busy throng,
Flock forth where Duty leads :
The caterpillars haste along,
And eke the centipedes.
The fish in yonder murm'ring brook,
Untouched by sin or pain,
Await the gently gentled hook ;—
But where is Betsy Jane ?

Ye churchyard elms—thou rugged yew—
Beneath your sombre shade
What forms that full of life I knew
Now still and cold are laid !
What friends have left me, one by one,
To people death's domain !
Their course is run ; their day is done ;—
But where is Betsy Jane ?

STRAINS FROM THE STRAND.

Twelve years B. J. and I had been
Betrothed—when, well-a-day !—
Another came upon the scene,
And bore my love away.
My wrongs this wounded heart forgives ;—
('Twere useless to complain,)
I wonder where that fellow lives ;
And where is Betsy Jane ?





MY ELEMENT.

AS a sweet thing of six 'twas my pleasure to stray
With Matilda (my nursery-maid),
Adding toys to my treasury day after day
From the wealth of the Lowther Arcade.
We may guess from the child what the man will become :
There were prophecies e'en in my toys.
I rejoiced in the trumpet, I banged at the drum,
And I basked in my element—Noise !

Gentle reader, thy bard is a Cockney by birth,
And a Cockney till death will remain.
An Utopia like London he knows not on earth,
And would search for its equal in vain.
There be corners and holes in the country, no doubt,
That are famed for their pastoral joys ;
Yet there still is one treasure such spots are without,
I refer to my element—Noise !

What suburban and soundless retreats have I tried !
I could spin such incredible yarns
Of my gloom-ridden visits to folks who reside
About Hammersmith, Dalston, and Barnes.
But I scorn so morose and unpleasant a theme ;
Gayer duty this goosequill employs.
Let the labour be mine to descant by the ream
On the charms of my element—Noise !

Why request me to envy the hermit who dwells
Far away from the world's busy throng?
(Even Crusoe got weary, the narrative tells,
Of his tight little island ere long.)
Such a life may be calmly seductive at first,
But how quickly such solitude cloy;
And how soon would the desolate anchorite thirst
For one hour of my element—Noise !

I am jotting, good reader, my sentiments down
On a cheerful and bright second-floor;
And the 'buses for all the four quarters of town
Are incessantly passing my door.
And the cries of conductors are sweet in mine ear,
And the shouts of the newspaper boys.
I defy the blue-devils ; Care cannot come here ;
I am steeped in my element—Noise !





HOPELESS !

“THE printer’s devil’s come for more”—
It cannot be, Jemima, surely ;
“He’s been already twice before?”—
Pooh, pooh ! ’tis all your fancy purely.
“He must not leave without it,” eh ?
Then let him wait upon the landing.
Take him a chair, too, by the way.
Or else he’ll soon get sick of standing.

Farewell, Jemima, get you gone,
And shut the door behind you gently !—
Now let me turn my gallop on,
And settle to my pace intently.
How hot it is again to-day !
So very close and enervating !
’Tis over ninety, I should say—
But I forgot, the boy is waiting.

Here goes !—a page or two of rhyme
Is nothing when I once begin it ;
My common average of time
Is just about a line a minute.
But now through this excessive heat,
My head’s as drowsy as a poppy ;
Which clogs the Muse’s weary feet,
And keeps me longer with my “copy.”

They say that stimulants are bad,
And help to make us all the hotter ;
Yet some will drink—tis very sad—
Until the reason seems to totter.
To qualify our spirits well
Is wise in this oppressive weather ;
To take some seltzer and Martell
And boldly mingle them together.

An inspiration, I declare !
The printer's boy is very handy.
He has an hour or so to spare,
So he shall fetch some S. and Brandy.
And when I've quaffed the friendly drink.
(Since Poesy is not propitious),
A drive upon a 'bus, I think,
To Hampstead Heath will be delicious.





WHAT CARE I?

SHALL I, like a love-lorn swain,
Die because a woman's plain?
Shall my locks grow gray with care
Just because she dyes her hair?
Be she hideous as a dream—
Waking sick men with a scream—
If she look not plain to *me*,
What care I how plain she be?

Shall a woman's faults inspire,
Day or night, my lips or lyre?
Shall her failings, countless grown,
Make me quite forget mine own?
Though her temper bad you find
As the worst of womankind,
If she be not cross to *me*,
What care I how cross she be?

Though her station be not high,
Shall I pine and weakly die?
Shall I scowl or look askance
Though she drop an H perchance?
Virtue makes a queenly dower,
More than rank and more than power;—
If she seems not low to *me*,
What care I how low she be?



OPTIMISM.

MY tutor taught me long ago
To make the very best
Of all that happens here below,
Whilst here below a guest ;
“ Because we know,” said he to me,
“ By Truth’s unerring light—
No matter what it *seems* to be,
Whatever *is* is right.”

Though thought—unjustly so—a dunce,
I took the words to heart ;
And as an optimist at once
I backed myself to start.
In sooth it is a pleasant creed
To feel, by day or night,
When things look very black indeed—
Whatever *is* is right.

I’ve had misfortunes by the score,
In love and money both ;
Enough to brim the optics o’er,
And prompt the heedless oath.

What then? The sun would shine again,
The skies again be bright.
One thought consoled me through my pain—
Whatever *is* is right.

Distress has by degrees effaced
Whatever good was mine ;
Late hours and liquor I've embraced ;
Clay pipes are in my line.
I'm lazy, coarse in what I say,
And far too prone to fight ;
But still I hold—be what I may—
Whatever *is* is right !





A LITTLE MUSIC.

SAY, what shall I sing to you, queen of my heart?
Let my larynx assert my devotion.
I'm here at my Collard, and ready to start
When a word sets my larynx in motion.
If music, in truth, be the language of Love,
I am trained pretty well in the lingo ;
Can coo like a dove in the notes up above,
And the lower can punish, by Jingo !

In French and Italian and Spanish I shine ;
I'm a polyglot wonder completely ;
I'll chant you a carol that comes from the Rhine,
Or a Swiss *Tu-ra-liety* neatly.
The lays of our snug little, tight little isle
I can call up a laugh or a tear in ;
And go through the lyrics, in illigant style,
That are dear to the daughters of Erin.

Of opera music I've always a stock ;
To the like not a soul ever listened ;
From Verdi and Meyerbeer down to Lecocq—
Never mind how the air may be christened.

My voice has a range and a compass immense
(Though it flies now and then to *falsetto*);
No critic possessing the least common sense
Ever sneers at my *voce di petto*.

Then think what a rare intellectual feast,
Lucky queen of my heart, is before you.
But stay! I'll not sing—not at present, at least,
For the banquet I offer might bore you.
Although I could warble my staves by the quire,
'Twould perhaps be as well—and more tender—
To bask for a while in the front of the fire,
With our feet on the edge of the fender.





A LITTLE CRAZY.

A VAUNT! begone! Molest me not!
My soul would yearn alone.
What common tread shall soil the spot
Where stands the Poet's throne?
I would not have one mouse about
In earshot of my song,
While I the swelling stanza shout
In music loud and long.
I am a Bard. Beware, beware
My flashing eyes, my floating hair!

Nay, not a hint of "cleaning up"
My spirit brooks to-day.
From Helicon was brimmed the cup
That lures me worlds away.
Undusted yet one other week
My furniture may stand.
Apollo summons—who shall seek
To stay my throbbing hand?
I am a Bard. Beware, beware
My flashing eyes, my floating hair!

The petty, paltry things of earth,
So dear to meaner men,
When thoughts Titanic leap to birth,
Retard the glowing pen.
Of articles to eat or drink,
Or articles of dress,
The nobler nature scorns to think,
Though needing them no less.
I am a Bard. Beware, beware
My flashing eyes, my floating hair !

Just now I had—so I believed—
Some verses “On a Storm,”
Not only very well conceived,
But exquisite in form.
I scratch my head, I beat my brow ;
'Tis vain—I cannot find
A fragment of my lyric now:
No matter ; never mind !
I am a Bard. Beware, beware
My flashing eyes, my floating hair !





A BIOGRAPHY.

"I WOULD be a task of no avail—
An enterprise of little worth—
To trace the hero of my tale
From boyhood, infancy, and birth.
Enough to say there dawned a day
That brought the cares of wedded life.
Yet why the wretchedness portray
Of such a home—with such a wife?

One truth alone would I reveal—
That ugly, gaunt, unlettered spouse,
No ray of love could ever feel ;
No spark of sentiment arouse.
My hero sadly saw the end
Of all his married bliss decreed.
His dog became his only friend,
A lively whelp, of terrier breed.

Affairs had reached their very worst.
She grew in vice, and grew in crime.
His ills, endurable at first,
Got unendurable in time.
One afternoon, in frolic fun,
He coaxed her to the window-sill.
A shove—a scream ! The deed was done—
Go—call it murder, if ye *will* !

They raised, of course, a hue and cry.
The parish, while its blood was up,
Despatched a beadle on the sly,
To seize my hero and the pup.
But, when the functionary came,
Irate the widowed mourner grew,
A stick he poised with deadly aim,
And beat the Beadle black and blue.

Full oft a spectre clad in white—
The ghastly semblance of the dead—
Would haunt the place at middle night,
And seek my hero's lonely bed.
Then wildly—madly—in the dark—
The fatal stick flew to and fro.
He rarely missed the ghostly mark,
For Desperation winged the blow.

Stern Justice in the end appeared,
And closed the avenues of Hope.
Too rapidly his doom was neared,
The cell—the scaffold—and the rope.
And yet, while ready to depart—
A victim in the jaws of death—
It seemed the freshness of his heart
Would leave him only with his breath.

“Forgive me, Hangman,” he exclaimed ;
“You see, I’m such a clumsy wretch !
Is this the noose ?—I’m quite ashamed.
Pray try it on to show me, Ketch !”
That hangman left a widowed wife
And half-a-dozen brats behind ;
My hero leads a jolly life,
And won’t leave nothing of the kind !



A PERFECT ANCHORITE.

THERE'S them, you know, as likes to go a-larking,
And hereabouts or thereabouts to roam ;
But pardon my ingeniously remarking
That them there is as likes to stick at home.
I once was in the swim, as you may term it,
And studied Life in every funny phase ;
Yet lately I've become an utter hermit,
I never takes no pleasure nowadays.

When young I had a classic education,
And that's a thing as pulls a fellow through ;—
My intellect was fit for any station
(Particularly Bow Street, *entre nous*).
I went, whenever anybody took me
Free, *gratis*, to the operas or plays ;
But somehow all my spirits has forsook me.
I never takes no pleasure nowadays.

In early life I patronised the Derby
As oft as ever Derby Day occurred ;
Then Epsom was a kind of *rus in urbe*
(I speaks my Latin, mind you, like a bird).

'Twas fun to see the 'Varsities a-rowing,
And on the race from Hammersmith to gaze.
I've grown to be the slowest coach a-going ;
I never takes no pleasure nowadays.

I found a scientific institution
Respectable, and yet a little slow ;
I hardly ever missed an execution
(They hangs at present in the gaol, you know).
The tastes I had were very pugilistic ;
I loved the ring and all its pretty ways.
I've lately been to no encounter fistic.
I never takes no pleasure nowadays.

My life's a Great Sahara, dry and sandy,
Without a blest oasis on the road ;
I lodge where not a single pub. is handy,
And have a church in front of my abode.
To go upon the spree is my aversion,
At home in sulky solitude I stays ;
Except a week a year for an excursion,
I never takes no pleasure nowadays.





A CONSTANT READER.

I AM—and pretty long have been—
A parent, reader dear.
My boy is nearly seventeen ;—
(Excuse a briny tear !)
That boy a model man will be ;
A pattern, by-and-by.
I've brought him up *myself*, you see,
And that's the reason why.

His virtues and his moral tone
Few saints could ever match ;
And he will frankly, fondly own
To whom he owes the batch.
He might have grown erratic—wild—
(A *criminal* indeed !)
If I had never taught my child
The sort of books to read.

Papas, be guided while ye may !
Reflect, it's very rash
Your brats to cram throughout the day
With goody-goody trash.
This truth is rarely understood ;—
Ere long the growing lad
Will grow weary of the good,
And hanker for the bad.

I carried out a wiser plan—
To Mental Science due ;—
My Ned's tuition I began
On works of lurid hue.
His *Newgate Calendar*, I know,
He recollects full well ;
'Twas in its leaves that long ago
He learnt the way to spell.

Full many a wild and gallant thing
Performed by gay Duval ;
Brave tales of Turpin ; and of King—
(His less-remembered "pal") ;—
Strange burglaries, and stranger crimes,
That marked the days of yore ;—
Have Ned and I, in other times,
Intently gloated o'er.

Yet Edward, though a daring lad,
Hath never "cracked a crib" :
At least, he *swore* he never had—
And Edward cannot fib.
He ne'er with pistols, on a nag,
Patrolled the country roads,
To scare a portion of their swag
From folks who carried loads.

Familiarity hath bred
(Or so I firmly trust)
For all the wicked books he read
A feeling of disgust.
So each well-educated mind
In Virtue's calmer joys
A novelty at last will find,
Which never, never cloy.

Thus Mental Science tells a truth ;
 (Dispute it, if ye can !)
How oft the crime-perusing youth
 Becomes the moral man.
If ever Ned should rear a son,
 To grow to seventeen ;—
May *he* be only such a one
 As Ned hath ever been !





THE DOOMED ONE.

I AM daintily decked for the bridal—
Ah, why was it fixed for to-day ?
Mine are sentiments more suicidal
Than suitably blithesome and gay.
As I brood on the future before me,
No solace my gloom can dispel ;
Nay, a morbid impression comes o'er me
Which liquor itself cannot quell.

Yet my boots have been perfectly polished,
My necktie is knotted with care ;
And a brush was entirely demolished
In smoothing my bonny brown hair.
I believe that the cut of my raiment
Is all it could possibly be ;
Though the date of its probable payment
No prophet on earth can foresee.

I am led like a lamb to the slaughter.
The cream of the *ton* will be there ;
For the bride is a baronet's daughter
With riches enough and to spare.

And a Dean will effect the espousal,
And, after the nuptials are o'er,
The great Gunter provides a carousal
For sixty partakers and more.

Though correct and complete in my clothing,
I feel quite a martyr to-day ;
And regard with a fear and a loathing
The part they request me to play.
I must never betray on one feature
The pangs that I struggle to hide ;
I am groomsman to Brown, lucky creature !
And lately made love to the bride !





THE CARES OF A CONDUCTOR.

“O H, bear me hence,” the maiden cried,
“Your steeds are strong and fleet ;
Nay, tell me not you’re full inside,
And cannot spare a seat.
Fly—swiftly as the swallow flies—
And set me safely down
Where sick to death my mother lies,
Away in Somers Town.”

“What ho, conductor ! Prithee stay !”
Exclaimed the City man ;
“Come, waft me to the Bank, I pray,
As quickly as you can.
Up Ludgate Hill, and thence through Chepe,
Insanely, fiercely dash ;
My needs are great, my troubles deep—
Our firm has gone to smash !”

“Look sharp,” the maddened father sobbed,
“Your dawdling drives me wild ;
I’m broken-hearted, ruined, robbed —
My fair, my only child !
At school, as far away as Bow,
I left the erring girl ;
But scarce a dozen hours ago
She bolted with an earl !”

STRAINS FROM THE STRAND.

"Blackwall, conductor, for your life!"

The stricken husband wept.

"Since last I saw my missing wife

I've neither drunk nor slept ;

But now far eastward am I bound,

For near the Isle of Dogs

A body in the night was found

Resembling Martha Moggs !"

Who says the bold conductor leads

A life of little care?

On lip and brow he daily reads

The symptoms of despair.

Ah, London passengers full oft,

Whichever way they ride,

Though looking lively up aloft,

Feel very ill inside !





ALL ON ONE SIDE.

AH, my Abou Ben Adhem, it's all very fine
To be fond of our frail fellow-creatures ;
Universal Philanthropy, half-way divine,
Was the best of your many good features.
I revere your example, and strive now and then
To revive it in fond recollection ;
I could love like an angel my dear brother-men,
Did they only return my affection.

There are thousands of beings, no doubt, on this earth,
Full of ev'ry perfection and beauty ;
I acknowledge their talents and bow to their worth,
For I feel that no less is my duty ;
But I gaze at the selfish and gold-grubbing crowd
With a feeling of bitter dejection.
Ah, my Abou ! to love them would make me so proud,
Could they stoop to return my affection.

When you flourished, Ben Adhem, in days long ago,
'Twas when Charity ranked as a virtue ;
And Goodwill and Fraternity reigned here below,
And made friends with you, ne'er to desert you.
Have they taken their flight, those beneficent three,
And indignantly cut our connection ?
Ah, to love all my neighbours how glad could I be,
Would they kindly return my affection !



LIVING IN HOPE.

TO-MORROW morning I propose
To start a fresh career ;
Though gracious goodness only knows
Which way I mean to steer.
I've done as much to make a name
As any soul alive,
And still I hope to fight for fame ;—
I'm only forty-five.

I wrote a farce at seventeen—
A sprout of early spring.
What muffs the managers have been
To snub the lively thing !
To tragic heights I'll now aspire,
And may in time contrive
To make my fortune and retire ;—
I'm only forty-five.

In youth, before my moral tone
Got quite securely fixed,
My hours were very late, I own ;
My drinks were very mixed.
On harmless tea and early bed
What thousands live and thrive !
I mean to change the life I've led ;—
I'm only forty-five.

When young I worshipped Emma Jane,
But that was long ago :
A silly girl and rather plain
(At least I fancy so).
She loved *another*, happy man !—
Her loss I still survive.
Ere long I'll " pop " to Betsy Ann ;—
I'm only forty-five.

A name, a fortune, and a wife
Will very soon be mine,
Supposing that my future life
Be just what I design.
I feel my spirits all agog,
And feel my hopes revive ;
I'll be a jovial jolly dog ;—
I'm only forty-five.





NO THOROUGHFARE.

THEY calmly bring me pen and ink ;
They fetch me paper—blue and white—
Then coolly run away and think
I calmly settle down to write.
My lazy brain I beg in vain
To send me anything to say ;
And I may try and try again—
My Muse is in the sulks to-day.

I think I thought a thing or two,
About a day or two ago,
That possibly for verse may do
And kindly into metre flow.
A quaint idea rarely fails
To form a lyric or a lay.
I bite my pen and bite my nails ;—
My Muse is in the sulks to-day.

My wits would aid me—would they not ?—
In farce or comedy, perchance,
To find a light and lively plot
Amongst the wits of sunny France.
It seems at present all the rage
To cross the Channel for a play.
But now I cannot pen a page ;—
My Muse is in the sulks to-day.

I've sketched a lovely story out—
A tale of love and suicide.
My novel would command, no doubt,
A circulation pretty wide.
I have a title in my head,
But after that I lose my way.
My pen of steel is one of lead ;—
My Muse is in the sulks to-day.

An essay on Fernando Po
Might suit the *Edinburgh Review* ;
And on the topic I could throw
Some lights astonishing and new.
'Twill take an hour—or little more—
To place my facts in due array.
Beginning is the only bore ;—
My Muse is in the sulks to-day.

I dawdle over little bits,
And merely pen the present scrawl
(With many starts and many fits)
To prove I cannot write at all.
It gives me agony to think
On any matter, grave or gay.
Farewell, my paper, pens and ink,—
My Muse is in the sulks to-day !





ANYTHING FOR A CHANGE.

HOW monotonously dreary
Life becomes in middle age !
Pah ! The story makes me weary,
How I long to turn the page !
No adventure, no romances,
Nothing new to do or say ;
Dull employments, duller fancies :—
All the same from day to day.

Smoothly ever flows the river :—
No excitement as of old
Sends my pulse on extra quiver,
Keeps my heart from growing cold.
Straighter than the straightest arrow,
Miles before me lies my way ;
It is gloomy, it is narrow :—
Just the same from day to day.

Getting up at eight and feeding
(Always ham and eggs at nine)—
Dawdling, writing, luncheon, reading,
Till the hour has come to dine.
After that I seek protection
From blue devils at the play ;
Then to bed in deep dejection :—
Just the same from day to day.

I would rather take my sorrows
Far from Habit's iron bands ;
I would rather take to-morrow's
Early train to foreign lands.
Other latitudes invite me ;
Here I cannot, will not stay ;
Such a life begins to blight me :—
Just the same from day to day.





MY NEIGHBOURS.

AS I glance with a brotherly feeling around
Either sideward or over the way,
I reflect on the sorrows and sins to be found
In the street where at present I stay.
But it's never my custom on morals to preach,
Or to slander or scandal incline ;
I should think it unmanly, by action or speech,
To be hard on a neighbour of mine.

I believe that there hardly exists upon earth
So unblushing a drunkard as Groggs :
With a longing for liquor which dates from his birth,
Has he reeled by degrees to the dogs.
They declare that he bullies his children and wife
When excited by spirits or wine.
I could paint you such terrible scenes in his life—
Only Groggs is a neighbour of mine.

I can scarcely believe that there ever drew breath
A more impudent liar than Braggs ;
With his bouncers and crammers he talks you to death,
For his tongue never falters or flags.
If he stumbles by accident over the truth,
It is clearly quite out of his line.
'Twould be well if I " cut " such a dangerous youth—
Only Braggs is a neighbour of mine.

'Tis my settled belief that there never saw light
Such a cheat and a swindler as Priggs ;
From his boyhood the rascal, by day and by night,
Has been running his larcenous rigs.
I could have him condemned, if I felt the desire,
To a punishment swift and condign.
I could soon put the wretch into felon's attire—
Only Priggs is a neighbour of mine.

Happy souls !—they may drink, they may lie, they may
cheat,
They may revel in vice and in crime,
While they chance to inhabit the square or the street
Where I fix my abode for a time.
Ah, my Groggs, and my Braggs, and my Priggs—'tis a bore
As a censor of morals to shine.
I should think it unkind, as I told you before,
To be harsh with a neighbour of mine.





MY EDUCATION.

WHEN a dear little innocent urchin of eight,
I was daily in trouble—now early, now late—
And, in consequence, either the cane was my fate
Or a box on my juvenile ear.
I endeavoured, I'm sure, to do all I was bid ;
And behaved like a meek and intelligent kid.
It was hard I should catch it as oft as I did ;
But my father was very severe !

I can recollect giving a peg-top away.
('Twas to Bobby I gave it ; and Bobby *could* .play)
What a mess I got into that notable day !
Quoth my daddy, " Now, young 'un, look here ;—
That's a nice clever thing for to go for to do !
There's a waste !—and a gift from your grandmamma, too !
Fetch the cane, you young varmint ; I'll soon settle *you* !"
For my father was very severe !

To a day-school he sent me, conveniently nigh
(Where I never got liked—I could never tell why) ;
And I once wandered home with a jolly black eye,
And my vision more cloudy than clear.
When I faced my progenitor, pale and in dread,
" Did you hit him again, sir ? " was all that he said.
" Nay," I answered ; and caught such a clout on the head ;
For my father was very severe !

Though the caning and cuffing were scarce to my taste,
The parental tuition has ne'er been effaced :

I believe its effects can be easily traced

Through the whole of my later career.

But the fact that a mild and a generous lad
Should have grown up a stingy, cantankerous cad,
Gives me reason to ask if I've cause to be glad

That my father was very severe ?





VAIN REGRETS.

HOW cruel it should come to pass,
We meet as thus we do—
Now I am fifty-six, alas !
And you are fifty-two !
Too fast the rapid years have run.
Reflect, what might have been
If I were only twenty-one,
And you but seventeen !

The traitor Time, with fell intent,
Has marked us on his way ;
We both have grown a little bent,
And both a little gray.
Ah me ! the damage he has done,
The changes we have seen,
Since I was only twenty-one,
And you but seventeen !

Ah, lady fair, we should have met
When life was in the spring.
The autumn, let us not forget,
Is quite another thing.
We both draw near the setting sun ;
Though both were fresh and green
When I was only twenty-one,
And you but seventeen !



ONLY FANCY.

TELL me, great Apollo, tell me, am I born to future fame?
Low, I grant it, is my stature ; vulgar, doubtless, is my
name.

As to brains and education, even when a tiny kid
I could say at least my letters, which my parents never did.
Visions haunt me in my slumber—dreams of higher, better
things ;

Mighty throbbings of ambition, weird and wild imaginings.
Tell, oh, tell me, stars above us, must I all my life remain
Tenant of a menial office—only call-boy at “the Lane?”

I’ve performed *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo*, *Richard*—all the lot ;
I’ve performed the merry *Stranger*—everything, no matter
what.

True, ’twas in my sleep I’ve done it ; yet, unless I much
mistake,

I can see my way to do it better far when wide-awake.
Only put the parts before me ; let my lines be written down ;
Give me but a month to study ; I’ll electrify the town !
Hush, my giddy heart, be quiet ! Peace, be still, my busy
brain !

Hath not Fortune, in a frolic, made me call-boy at “the Lane?”

H

Meekly, as a young beginner, I could fill some lower sphere ;
 I could raise aloft a banner, would they let me once appear.
 I should thrill the house—I know it—were I favoured by the
 Fates,

Though the simple words I uttered were : “My lord, the
 carriage waits.”

Yes, my figure *may* be puny ; still, by credible report,
 Edmund Kean was quite a pigmy, Garrick was absurdly short.
 Altitudes the most prodigious talent always may attain.
 There are heaps of hidden talent in the call-boy at “the Lane.”

Then, with all my pow’rs of humour, all my knowledge of
 the stage,

I could write a play, I fancy, worthy of the present age.

I could vanquish in a canter all the dramatists alive :

No three-acted adaptation, but a comedy in *five* !

Shade of Sheridan, assist me ! Could I fail to make a hit ?

Mr. Grumps, the heavy father, tells me I’ve a ready wit.

Stalls and gallery, pit and boxes, would, in one united strain,

Sing deservedly the praises of the call-boy at “the Lane.”

Have my dreams of glory vanished ? Hath my gilded vision
 flown ?

Doth deceitful Fancy leave me gloomy, helpless, all alone ?

Ah, ’tis nearly time to open ! Yes, the hour will soon be here

When the second low-comedian sternly sends me forth for beer.

Carpenters will scowl upon me. Grimy churls, who shift the
 scenes,

Will deride me, little knowing what poetic fervour means.

Woe is me ! my hopes are shattered, all my sunny schemes
 are vain !

I accept my mild position as the call-boy at “the Lane.”



THE BILIOUS BACCHANAL.

DRINK, brother martyrs, a health to your maladies,
Brim up a glass to your aches and your ills ;
What a reviver a bibulous ballad is,
During a penance of mixtures and pills !
Who's for *taraxacum* ? who for *nux vomica* ?
Who for decoction of aloes, perchance ?
Let not a pang or two quench your *vis comica* !
Sing, brother cripples ; we cannot well dance.

When we're attacked in the ducts that are biliary,
When in despair for the doctor we send,
Laughter can act as his truest auxiliary,
Mirth and good spirits his case can befriend.
Chirp yet again, though the twinges may trouble you
Just in the maddest and best of the strain ;
Heed not the throe, though in halves it may double you ;
Music will prove a specific for pain.

Look at the nights and the mornings of jollity,
Think of the feasts that have ended in *this* !
Meats of a dainty though dangerous quality,
Wines that no Turk would be willing to miss.

How can the whispers of caution have any weight,
While at the board your gay minutes you pass?
How can you lessen one dish by a pennyweight?
How by a sip can you limit one glass?

Is your digestion a customer slippery,
Scarce to be trusted, in short, for a day?
Still it is *dulce in loco desipere*,
Though for the past in the present you pay.
Seems not our invalid holiday glorious?
Greet, brothers all, the relief with a smile.
Pledge *Hepatitis* in chorus uproarious
(Either the Greek or the Latin for *bile*).





SOUVENIRS.

METHINKS 'twas in a crowd we met,
My early love and I ;
But how it happened I forget—
And where, and when, and why.
She *may* have worn a rosy wreath
Upon a snowy brow ;
But what the face was like beneath
I don't remember now.

We nimbly threaded, hand in hand,
The mazes of the dance ;
Amidst the pauses of the band
We sought each other's glance.
But what the music may have been,
On that ecstatic night—
And what our looks could ever mean
I've now forgotten quite.

What rare felicity was mine
To press her finger-tips,
And wait for ev'ry lisp divine
From those bewitching lips !
She said the room was rather warm—
Or words to that effect—
But made the statement in a form
I scarcely recollect.

Her mother—or her aunt—was there
 (At least I fancy so).
But whether dark or whether fair
 I don't precisely know.
She spoke to me, I've not a doubt,
 In quite a friendly way :
But what her talk was all about
 I can't exactly say.

Oh, if there be on earth a joy
 All other joys above,
'Tis when a little curly boy
 Conceives an early love !
True passion rarely is the lot
 Of mortals, I suppose ;
And whether mine was true or not,
 Good gracious only knows !





OVER FORTY.

CAPTAIN MORRIS indited a line long ago
On the "sweet shady side of Pall Mall."
(’Tis a region I can’t say I very well know,
Or—in all probability—*shall*.)
Be it mine a more personal topic to try,
Which has rarely been hit on before.
I would sing the delights and the pleasures that lie
On the sweet shady side of two-score.

After dreading the advent of dull middle-age
For the last half-a-dozen wild years,
How I welome it *now* ! The repose of the sage
Has demolished those juvenile fears.
I am flippant no longer, but gravely serene ;
All my frolics and follies are o’er.
I can claim the respect of the gushing and green,
On the sweet shady side of two-score.

You should look o’er the reading I daily go through !
For, when at it, I never can stop.
Metaphysics I’ve studied—and history too—
Till my brain was all over the shop.
It annoys me to feel that there once was a time
When I looked upon books as a "bore."
I regard such a sentiment quite as a crime,
On the sweet shady side of two-score.

What a notable change in the hours that I keep—
What a change in the things that I drink !
At eleven, p.m., I betake me to sleep,
Or repose on my pillow to think.
My refreshments, of spirit—of wines—and of beer—
Which, alas ! were so frequent of yore,
Are all banished, and only in visions appear,
On the sweet shady side of two-score.

At the ball or the banquet, the concert or dance,
I've a freedom that none may dispute.
The old women with unmarried girls look askance,
And their unmarried girls follow suit.
Either waltz or quadrille with aversion I see,
They are dances I loathe and abhor :
But could anyone seek for a partner in *me*,
On the sweet shady side of two-score ?

Let your sentiment-monger go cant by the page
On the pleasures of childhood and youth ;
He may chant the delights of decrepit old age,
And be just as remote from the truth ;
For the source of contentment we rarely can touch
(Pray reflect on my words, I implore)
Till we come to be rather—*but not very much*—
On the sweet shady side of two-score !





RHYMES (?)

MY life—to Discontent a prey—
Is in the sere and yellow leaf.
'Tis vain for happiness to pray :
No solace brings my heart relief.
My pulse is weak, my spirit low ;
I cannot think, I cannot write.
I strive to spin a verse—but lo !
My rhymes are very rarely right.

I sit within my lowly cell,
And strive to court the comic Muse ;
But how can Poesy excel,
With such a row from yonder mews ?
In accents passionately high
The carter chides the stubborn horse ;
And shouts a “Gee !” or yells a “Hi !”
In tones objectionably hoarse.

In vain for Poesy I wait ;
No comic Muse my call obeys.
My brains are loaded with a weight
That mocks the laurels and the bays.
I wish my brains could only be
Inspired with industry anew ;
And labour like the busy bee,
In strains no Genius ever knew.

STRAINS FROM THE STRAND.

Although I strive with all my might,
Alas, my efforts all are vain !
I've no *afflatus*—not a mite ;
I cannot work the comic vein.
The Tragic Muse may hear my pleas,
And waft me to a purer clime.
Melpomene ! assist me, please,
To somewhat higher heights to climb.





THE CRY OF THE CAPTIVE.

'TIS the height of the season !—I gaze with a sigh,
From aloft on my trim second floor,
As the sons and the daughters of Mammon go by
Through the thoroughfare fronting my door.
They are matchless in manner—delightful in dress—
But I look on them sadly, and say,
“ This is all very fine, but I frankly confess
I would rather be somewhere away.”

'Tis the height of the season !—Our Commons and Lords
In their wisdom are both to the fore ;
And a splendid example our senate affords
To the senates of all the world o'er.
In the cause of their country they willingly work,
As their ancestors did in their day ;
I revere the traditions of Chatham and Burke—
But I wish I were somewhere away.

'Tis the height of the season !—Our stage for a time
Is invaded by Teuton and Gaul ;
And our opera-houses from Italy's clime
Bade the singing-birds come at their call.
There is nothing delights me so much as to go
To an opera, concert, or play ;
My thermometer marks about seventy, though,
And I long to be somewhere away.

'Tis the height of the season !—We shortly shall sigh
To lawn tennis and cricket farewell ;
Pretty trips up the river will cease by-and-by,
Merry picnics in dingle or dell ;
Piccadilly will soon be deserted and bare,
To the Row not a straggler will stray ;
Every booth will be emptied in Vanity Fair—
It is time I went somewhere away.

From the parks and the squares and the streets would I flee,
To the moorland, the hill-top, and lake,
It can matter not much what my journey may be,
Or the road I think proper to take.
So my Bradshaw, my Murray, my Baedeker bring,
Let me make up my mind while I may.
To select my retreat is a troublesome thing—
But I mean to get somewhere away.





HALF-WAY.

MY heart—my hand—my life—my all—with rapture I
surrender'd :

My worldly goods, though very small, with tender vow I
tender'd.

My hopes were easy to deceive ; too late I see it clearly.
She rather loved me, I believe ; she never loved me dearly.

By heaps of amatory rhymes I proved that I adored her ;
And, in the olden merry times, they hardly ever bored her.
My happiness I thought secure ; I wooed her so sincerely.
She rather loved me, I am sure ; she never loved me dearly

Across the meadow, side by side, how oft we went a-roaming,
In merry May, at eventide—*poetic!* the “ gloaming.”
We talked, as other folks may do, about the weather merely.
She rather loved me, it is true ; she never loved me dearly.

But, when my passion held the sway, my gifts of conversation
Were exercised in such a way as laughed at emulation.
Alas ! my wisdom and my wit were wasted very nearly.
She rather loved me, I admit ; she never loved me dearly.

A day appeared—ah, bitter day ! on which there came *another* ;
And, in a free and easy way, she bade him “ ask her mother.”
I can't complain, for girls will act full often very queerly.
She rather loved me, that's a fact ; she never loved me dearly.



THE PENITENT.

NAY, twine about the poet's brow
No gaudy coronal of bays ;
I lack no wreath of laurel now,
Go, keep them both for brighter days.
I ask a crown—the truth to tell—
More cheap and easy to obtain :
One lowly napkin, wetted well,
Might calm this fever of my brain.

Bear hence the paper, pens, and ink,
To-day I will not, cannot write ;
Here sadly let me sit and think
Of things that happened yesternight.
Though scarcely in the proper mood
For jotting jingles one by one,
It suits my gloomy soul to brood
On deeds far better left undone.

Say, what was I to Freddy B——
That he should ask me there to dine?
And what was he at all to me,
Except a bosom friend of mine?
And why was not the dinner plain,
A joint and vegetable feed?
I put the query once again,
And echo answers, *Why indeed?*

Then, somewhere in a vast saloon,
Were some who sang and some who played ;
And I forget this afternoon
What laughs we had or jokes we made.
Full oft, as now it seems to me,
We passed around the brimming cup ;
Then Freddy B., with impish glee,
Suggested stopping there to sup.

One thing I never dreamed was *this*,
That supper meant cigars or drink ;
Or, ere I plunged in that abyss,
I might have lingered on the brink.
Go, fetch me seltzer—bring me hock—
And bind the fillet round my head.
I still maintain that four o'clock
Is late enough to go to bed.





MY TREASURES.

I HID this ringlet in my desk,
For some especial reason,
When Life was gaily picturesque
And in the loving season.
I gaze upon the relic now
In rapturous emotion ;
But where I got it—when—or how—
I own I've not a notion.

This yellow glove I put away
('Tis faded now, or nearly)
Because upon a summer day
I prized the owner dearly.
But *when* I stole this yellow glove—
Soft witness of affection !—
Or how its wearer won my love,
Escapes my recollection.

This portrait in my desk I keep—
'Tis photographic only—
It lulls my many cares to sleep
When I am sad and lonely.
But whether this belongs to me
By chance or through intention,
And whose the pretty face may be,
I can't exactly mention.

I dream of days for ever gone,
O'er twenty dear mementos.
(Their number I can count upon
My fingers and my ten toes.)
But, should you ask me how or why
They claim such adoration,
My heart's unwilling—so am I—
To grant the information.





MY CARTE—A FEVERISH DREAM.

I WAS fain to discover some gift for my fair
 (Which was no easy matter to choose).
I perchance would have sent her some locks of my hair,
 But my locks are too scanty to lose.
Should I proffer some trinket—a novel—some gloves—
 Or deposit some rhymes at her feet?
Nay, to startle the dearest and last of my loves
 I would sit for my *carte de visite*.

The resolve that had flashed through my fancy at e'en
 Re-appeared in my slumbers at night—
Never yet such a series of horrors, I ween,
 Filled the soul of a sleeper with fright.
I was wafted in visions—I cannot say how—
 To some weird and sequestered retreat;
Where, accosting a Stranger, I asked with a bow—
 “Can I sit for my *carte de visite*?”

Could I dream that the Stranger so meek and so mild
 Was a Fiend in the likeness of Man?
He returned my salute; he benignantly smiled;
 He politely responded “You *can*!”
Such a picture of artless yet elegant ease
 I was charmed, I acknowledge, to meet;
So I said, “Will you point out the chair, if you please,
 Where I sit for my *carte de visite*?”

In a trice, like a criminal bound on the rack,
I indented that engine of pain ;
While a cunningly-fashioned machine at my back
Played a march on the base of my brain.
Quoth a voice, "Take a natural attitude, Sir :
Do not *wobble* so much, I entreat.
It will ruin the negative, mind, if you stir
While you sit for your *carte de visite*."

I became like a rock ; but the voice in mine ear
Gently muttered, "That's better, no doubt :
But your smile is a little spasmodic, I fear,
And I don't like your chin sticking out !"

* * * *

I awoke with a struggle—my blood running cold—
As it runs while my dream I repeat.
If my reader should relish the tale that I've told—
Let him sit for his *carte de visite*.





'T WAS NOT SO LONG AGO.

HOW fondly I remember yet
Your sweet and sunny face !
I can't forget the hour we met,
And can't forget the place.
A little time away it seems—
About a day or so ;
Our life is made of little dreams—
'Twas not so long ago.

Ah me ! what silly things we say,
What silly things are done,
When Youth and Pleasure lead the way,
And folks are twenty-one !
Like angry waves the cruel years
Have tossed me to and fro ;
And yet how close the past appears !—
'Twas not so long ago.

I recollect the tender talk
We held along the lane ;
Our dialogue throughout the walk
Was fervid, though inane.
You hovered long, it seems to me,
Between a " Yes " and " No ; "
I've ne'er forgotten *that*, you see—
'Twas not so long ago.

We both adorn the wedded state,
And now are fixed for life ;
Another husband is your mate,
And mine another wife.
Yet years above my head may roll,
And wrap my head in snow,
Ere I forget our summer stroll—
'Twas not so long ago.





A MILD COMPLIMENT.

COME, play to me, dearest ; I long to be carried
 Away from our universe over the stars.
I think, from the day when we madly got married,
 You scarce have indulged me with eight little bars.
With talent like yours 'tis a shame and a pity
 That *I* should be grudged the display of such pow'rs ;
Besides, while your husband's away in the City,
 The children assert that you're at it for hours.

There, play as I bid you : it makes me so lonely
 To brood after dinner with nothing to do.
We could never try whist, with a pair of us only ;
 Besides, I am hardly much better than *you*.
I've books by the dozen, but find that they bore me ;—
 For some are so flippant, and some are so deep.
What a fit of depressions I feel coming o'er me !
 Do play, there's a darling, and send me to sleep.





OUR KITTEN.

THE thing is meek, the thing is mild ;
And oftentimes a little child
May fondle it or play with it.
But when—as children often dare—
From tail to head you rub its hair,
It has an ugly way with it.

Whene'er our sitting-room it shares,
Amongst the tables and the chairs
It innocently looks about.
But oft, when mischief thither tends,
From chairs to tables it ascends
And worries all the books about.

Our lively kitten well may boast,
Among its many sins, a host
Of good and proper qualities.
It likes to scratch, it loves to bite ;
But faults like these in such a mite
Are nothing but frivolities.

Its pretty little tricks we praise ;
We dote upon its winning ways,
And love to make a friend of it.
Methinks the Bridge of Waterloo—
A basket, and a stone or two—
Ere long will be the end of it !



ADVERTISEMENTS.

WHENEVER with my Muse I toy,
And scribble what I chance to think,
I would not for the world employ
Inferior paper, pens, or ink.
Behold me, seated at my desk !
Let Fancy only bid me start
Some lines pathetic or burlesque—
I've all the weapons of my art.

This paper wafts my words away,
My ev'ry thought from pole to zone ;
(And, let my words be what they may,
My thoughts at least are all my own.)
No earthly paper that I know
Can possibly with mine compare.
I bought a ream a week ago
Of Messrs. Dash—no matter where.

This ink, which echoes every sigh
Of love, and anguish, and remorse
(Appropriately blue in dye,
And best in quality, of course),
I got at some superior shop
In Blank Street, and methinks the name
Was—wait a bit : one second stop !—
Well, never mind ; it's all the same.

These pens—metallic and of quill—
Which give to print my lofty rhyme,
Have been the agents of my will
For some considerable time.
They're excellent—yet not a trace
Of where they came from I possess :—
I seem to recollect the place,
But can't remember the address.

How splendid are the goods they sell,
These folks with whom I love to deal !—
'Twould not have been to treat them well,
Were I their merits to conceal.
And if my little puff they prize,
Their bounden duty is, I think,
To send me, *gratis*, new supplies
Of paper and of pens and ink.





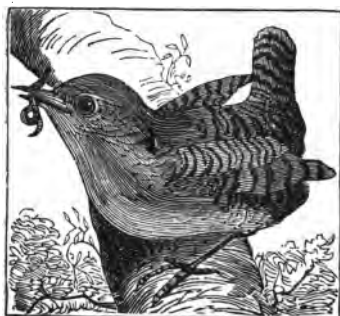
THE BIOGRAPHY OF BRIGGS.

BEN BRIGGS was a sort of a kind of a chap
That we none of us knew much about.
He was thought now and then a bad fellow, mayhap ;
Now and then a good fellow, no doubt.
Such a character queer, such a character quaint,
Is a difficult thing to define ;
To assert whether Briggs was a demon or saint
I shall mildly, but firmly, decline.

There breathes not, I wager, one soul upon earth
Who can state in a positive way
The particular county where Briggs had his birth,
Or could fix that event by the day.
He was called either Jacob, or Joseph, or James,
But could never precisely say *what* ;
It was just because nobody cared about names
That we christened him Ben on the spot.

Not extremely robust, nor excessively slim ;
He was nothing uncommon in height ;
And we frankly confessed that, in talking of *him*,
We could never make sure to be right.
With a neither prolific nor scant head of hair
(Of a strange and anomalous hue),
He combined funny eyes—not exactly a pair—
Which were either deep olive or blue.

Ben Briggs from his youth as a Quaker was bred,
Though to Popery somewhat inclined ;
And in choosing a creed, it was openly said,
Was unwilling to make up his mind.
Yet it matters but little. We all must allow
That a lot of respectable men
Are parading about in society now,
And are not a bit better than Ben !





SUSPIRIA !

LIFE is a snare, a delusion, a mockery ;
Faith is a bubble that bursts into air ;
Friendship and Love are more brittle than crockery ;
Hope is a tempter that lures to despair.
Out on the world with its empty frivolity !
Tortured in body, my mind on the rack,
How can I share either jesting or jollity,
Moaning in bed with a bilious attack ?

Hush, giddy children of laughter and vanity,
Vex not the soul of the bard with your glee ;
Haply ere long, by the laws of humanity,
Most of your company crippled may be.
Think me not harsh or unpleasantly rigorous—
Nay, on your sports I would willingly smile—
You, though, are playful, and active, and vigorous ;
I, merry friends, am a martyr to bile.

Fain would I join in your mirth and your merriment,
Fain be the first in the dance and the song
(Though my physician believes that experiment
Would, on the whole, be decidedly wrong) ;
Somehow, perhaps, I am far better out of it—
Why should I dream of such revels as these ?
Ah, what a twinge ! I am worse, not a doubt of it.
Nurse, will you bring the *taraxacum*, please !



AN INFIDEL.

I ONCE believed that never lived a pair
So faultless as my father and my mother ;
Papa so handsome, and mamma so fair,
And both so dearly fond of one another.
But I detest a woman when she drinks,
And hate a begging-letter writer rather ;
So lately I have come to lose, methinks,
All faith in both my mother and my father.

I once believed a maiden could be true,
And in my teens was pretty true to Polly.
My hopes were painted of a golden hue ;
I hugged my chains and revelled in my folly.
The dream is o'er ; a bitter lot is mine.
She left me for another one, the traitress !
Her husband is a private in the Line,
And Polly, my adored, a City waitress.

I once believed I had a bosom friend
(We went in early life to school together).
Our brotherhood we swore should never end,
Through sunny seasons or in stormy weather.
My gold was his to fling away in sport
I may have been, as Frenchmen say, *trop crédule*).
It strikes me, when he trotted through "the Court,"
He might at least have put me in the schedule.

I once believed a publisher would make
A tidy fortune on my tiny lyrics ;
Considering the rubbish that they take
From paltry novices and small empirics.
So—firmly disbelieving as I do,
That I am filial, amiable, or clever—
I quite believe that in a day or two
I shan't believe in anything whatever !





SECOND THOUGHTS.

OH for a home on the Lago Maggiore !—
Some sweet little place (not excessive in rent) ;—
Forgetting my hopes and my visions of glory,
Through life would I linger in quiet content.
Its children are charming—its music is florid—
Its climate is all that a climate can be ;
But its cookery's awful—its dishes are horrid—
No home on the Lago Maggiore for me.

Oh for a sojourn in sunny Granada !
The charms of that city this pen cannot speak.
For years could I stay at some pretty *posada*,
Where lodging and board would be so much a week.
But the merits of soap, among folks that are Spanish,
Are not as well known as I gladly would see :
So my wishes I mildly but firmly will banish—
No sojourn in sunny Granada for me.

Oh for a nest amid Switzerland's valleys—
The lake at my feet and the mountain above !
Sweet spots where the soul of the wanderer dallies .
All day between fancies of nature and love.
And yet (as I know not a word of the lingo)—
Supposing the natives and I disagree,
Explanation would not be so easy, by jingo !—
No nest amid Switzerland's valleys for me !



AND YET.

IS Youth a jackal to despair?—
Can early love be crime?
I hardly know—I scarcely care;—
But hush!—there *was* a time.
Down, down, my throbbing heart. Be still!—
Think'st thou that I forget?—
A mask I wear, and ever will.
I heave no sigh—*and yet!*

The pleasures of the lonely wild
Are all my pleasures now:
I scour the forest like a child,
With bare and blighted brow.
Say, how could aught be otherwise?—
I knew it, when we met.
Behold my dry but heated eyes:—
I shed no tear—*and yet!*

She was a phantom of delight:—
What matters *that*? Ah, ha!—
She walked in beauty like the night;
But what is beauty?—Bah?
I hate the world—I loathe my kind—
The whole confounded set;
And I could wish them—never mind.
I make no row—*and yet!*



A NOBLE CALLING.

TO be painters or poets a host of us try—
To be actors or singers we strive ;—
Or to trade or to commerce we hopefully fly
For the coin that will keep us alive.
To the painters and poets their craft may be dear,
And the rest may enjoy it no doubt ;
Yet I think they must envy the modest career
Of the stalwart and stern “ Chucker-out.”

Lo ! the Gaiety Restaurant gleams on the Strand,
And invites the occasional guest.
There are sofas (American leathered) at hand,
Where the peripatetic may rest.
You can roam from your sixpenny juice of the grape
To your lowly twopen'orth of stout ;
And your eyes you can feast on the muscular shape
Of the gloomy and grim “ Chucker-out.”

What a face and a figure ! My country, be calm !—
While thy sons are so sturdy and strong,
Thou art queen of the nations, and Victory's palm
Evermore to thyself shall belong.
With a zeal patriotic, a fervour intense,
And an awe that is nearly devout,
Ev'ry day do I scan the proportions immense
Of the burly and brave “ Chucker-out.”

'Tis a fact that our actors are gentlemen all ;
And our authors all gentlemen are.
As a rule they are meeker than mice when they call
For their drink at the Gaiety bar.
Yet it often occurs (upon Treasury-days)
That they argue, and wrangle, and shout ;
And attract the severely implacable gaze
Of the watchful and weird "Chucker-out."

By the scruff of my neck to be taken in tow,
And *instantly* expelled from the place,
On my nerves, I believe, would inflict such a blow,
That I ne'er could outlive the disgrace.
When it looks like a fight, and there happen by chance
To be medical students about,
I instinctively shun them and flee from the glance
Of the frowning and fierce "Chucker-out."





A PHILISTINE.

WHEN the terrible tale of my troubles you hear,
I expect your compassion and pity.
My income is only three hundred a-year,
Which I earn as a clerk in the City.
The sum should be ample, of course, you may say,
To secure me my bread and my butter ;
But somehow æsthetics have got in my way,
And my wife has gone “utterly utter.”

In a sensible manner my thoughts I express
On the state of the stocks or the weather.
When Taste's on the *tapis*, I frankly confess
That I'm out of the talk altogether.
I'm snubbed like a schoolboy at every word
That I blushingly stammer and stutter ;
In fact, my position's becoming absurd,
Since my wife has gone “utterly utter.”

A professional beauty could scarcely be worse
In the make and the cost of her dresses ;
I gaze with alarm at the runs on my purse,
From her varied artistic excesses.
She means to accomplish my ruin, 'tis clear ;
I believe I shall die in a gutter,
Or end by some desperate act my career,
Now my wife has gone “utterly utter.”

There's a fellow that sups at our house now and then,
Who is known as a Poet of Culture ;
The jealousy common to most married men
Pecks away at my heart like a vulture.
On Aubrey de Laine, and his verses insane,
Very deep are the curses I mutter ;
'Tis all through the study of trash so inane
That my wife has gone "utterly utter."

My china, my furniture, both are *intense*,
And my visitors half-idiotic ;
You can't find a corner for plain common sense
Where the monarch High Art is despotic.
So day after day I go sulking away,
In a fume and a fret and a flutter ;
But what can I *do*, sir, and what can I *say*,
If my wife has gone "utterly utter?"





OLD AND NEW.

I WENT last year to a jovial party,
When dark December was well-nigh dead.
The host was kind and the hostess hearty ;
My thoughts were banished from home and bed.
We talked, we laughed, in a style befitting
The cognac, whisky, and milder gin.
(Our object, reader, was only sitting
The Old Year out and the New Year in).

For Smith was with us, in all his glory,
And Brown was present in extra force ;
Young Thompson told us a splendid story,
While Jones was brimming with puns, of course.
You *must* confess, for a social being,
The task was easy to drink and grin ;
A first-rate way, on the whole, of seeing
The Old Year out and the New Year in.

The fun grew fast as the time was flying ;
The hours grew bigger that first were small.
The dance and lyric we still kept plying,
And none took note of the chimes at all.
Our mirth set fairly the rafters ringing,
For care we cared not a paltry pin.
Who knows one pleasure on earth like singing
The Old Year out and the New Year in ?

At five A.M. (as I now conjecture),
I reached my home and my sleepless wife ;
I crawled upstairs to a curtain lecture—
The worst I've been to in all my life.
Farewell, ye pranks of a mad night's playing !
One year may close and the next begin ;
But none shall anywhere find me staying
The Old Year out and the New-Year in.





QUALIFYING.

TO forgive and forget, says the proverb of old,
Is a duty one owes to mankind ;
But, alas ! in a world so deceitful and cold,
Very few that can do it we find.
In the chequered career that our destiny brings,
The injunction will oft be upset.
From our dawns to our eves there are manifold things
We forgive—but we cannot forget.

If your uncle, my reader, should perish—and leave
A respectable sum when he dies—
It is right that a nephew should look to receive
A proportionate share of the prize.
In a circle, to test the contents of the will,
The disconsolate mourners have met.
And, suppose you discover your share to be *nil*,
You forgive—but you cannot forget.

In the days when my life was a dream of the Spring,
Early love was my blessing and curse.
(You may think 'tis a somewhat exceptional thing ;
On the contrary, quite the reverse.)
'Twas a rival that sundered my false one and me.
What a blow ! I remember it yet.
Still I trust she is happy ; I *never* shall be :
I forgive—but I cannot forget.

In finance, how the boldest of beings will shrink
From obliging his intimate friends !
He can tell that the wily ones never will think
Of returning the trifles he lends.
Nay, the weeks may elapse, and the months may go by,
But he feels it is folly to fret ;
So he buttons his pockets—too late—with a sigh ;—
He forgives—but he cannot forget.

It is much to your credit, ye children of earth,
So discreetly on earth to behave ;
Never nurse a revenge from the hour of your birth
To the hour when ye jog to your grave.
Through the world ye can calmly and placidly go,
Till ye pay Mother Nature her debt.
'Twill be well for the friends who survive ye to know
Ye forgave—though ye could not forget.





DRAWBACKS.

IF your locks were not so yellow,
And your eyes were not so blue,
I should feel a lucky fellow
To be running after *you*.
Yes, your love would be a blessing,
Yet I strive not for the prize ;
I prefer a girl possessing
Jetty locks with jetty eyes.

If your form were not so stately,
And your shape so slimly tall,
'Twould increase my pleasure greatly
Such a maiden mine to call.
But, if calmly I selected,
I could wish my choice to be
Short, and plump, and unaffected ;—
And you're neither of the three.

If your views were less erratic
On the theme of Woman's wrongs ;
If your talk were less dogmatic,
And you liked my comic songs ;
If, in short, I found you only
The reverse of what you *are*—
You should share my life so lonely
And become its guiding star !



NOT QUITE.

BRITANNIA—so preachers and prophets declare—
Is undoubtedly coming to grief ;
The decline and the fall of our country, they swear,
Is their settled and solemn belief.
With our preachers and prophets I fain would agree,
For to differ from both I regret.
At the end of her tether Great Britain may be—
But I don't see the signs of it yet.

Our commerce is not very brisk, to be sure,
And our trade may be deep in the downs ;
But as long as our strength and our courage endure
We can smile at Adversity's frowns.
Of our food, so they tell us, we're fast running short,
And are up to our shoulders in debt ;
Very shortly, they say, we shall "go through the Court,"
But I don't see the signs of it yet.

Our Army, our Nays, we never can trust
(So the preachers and prophets affirm) ;
'Tis our fate for the future to crawl in the dust,
And be trodden to death like a worm.
As the Greeks and the Romans have gone to the wall,
So in turn will our pride be upset ;
I am told that ere long we shall sing very small—
But I don't see the signs of it yet.

Our stage and our poetry make no advance—
On the contrary, quite the reverse ;
For our drama depends on our neighbours in France,
And our bards are æsthetic or worse.
There is nothing, they say, in the musical way,
From a British composer we get ;
And our sculptors and painters have gone to decay—
But I don't see the signs of it yet.

Poor Albion, the preachers and prophets assert,
On the brink of eternity lies ;
And the most they can manage, its doom to avert,
Is to turn up the whites of their eyes.
They may groan in their spirits and squander their breath,
For unhappy John Bull they may fret ;
The poor creature is possibly sick unto death—
But I don't see the signs of it yet.





PEGGY DEAR !

A PASTORAL POEM.

I'VE been waiting in the lane,
Peggy dear !
In the wind and in the rain
Sticking here :
And the former keenly blew,
And the latter soaked me through,
As I lingered here for *you*,
Peggy dear !

But my dream of love is o'er,
Peggy dear !
I will trouble you no more—
Never fear.
The appointment was for eight—
Up at yonder wicket gate—
And eleven's rather late,
Peggy dear !

I am fated, I'll be sworn,
Peggy dear !
To awake to-morrow morn
Pretty queer ;
Of the poultice and the pill
I shall have to take my fill,
And of syrup of the squill,
Peggy dear !

It may please you to be told,
Peggy dear !
That I've caught my death of cold ;—
That is clear.
'Twill delight you to have known—
When my final breath has flown—
That the fault was all your own,
Peggy dear !





OPEN TO CONVICTION.

ON all that happens everywhere
I form a firm opinion.
My fancy is as free as air
Within its own dominion ;
Yet qualms of conscience, I confess,
Will now and then afflict me ;
When critics on the daily Press
Combine to contradict me.

Some witty play excites, perhaps,
My loud and silly laughter ;
And yet I find my mirth collapse
The very morning after.
My *Daily N.*, my *Daily T.*
Lament the failure greatly :—
So dull a piece, they both agree,
Has not been written lately.

I love to see a picture-show,
And, after due reflection,
Could name to ev'ry one I know
The gems of that collection.
Too soon my *Standard* or my *Post*
Makes fun of all my learning,
And states that what has pleased me most
Is only fit for burning.

In thrilling novels I delight,
And envy most sincerely
The folks who sit them down to write
Some half-a-dozen yearly.
And yet what folly 'tis to read—
Or even to begin them !—
Reviewers all are quite agreed
There's not an atom *in* them.

'Twere surely better, I should say,
To stifle my convictions,
When they are met from day to day
With utter contradictions.
As oft as I may wish to prove
My taste or orthodoxy,
'Twill be a safe and clever move
To think by way of proxy !





NO GOOD WISHING.

WITH a frame full of aches, and a heart full of sorrow,
I crawl on my mission of woe.
My regrets of to-day, and my fears for to-morrow
Pursue me where'er I may go.
And the night never brings to me solace or quiet—
No comfort arrives at the morn ;
For my sighs and my tears are my soul's bitter diet.—
I wish that I'd never been born !

Yet there once was a time when the bonds of affection
About my soft heart were entwined.
(She was fair—to the best of my fond recollection—
Or, if she was dark, never mind).
But, alas ! from these eager though boyish embraces
My Anna Maria was torn ;
And she vanished, forgetting to leave any traces—
I wish that I'd never been born !

Long ago did I nurture my dreams of ambition,
Besieged by a longing sublime
To achieve among poets my proper position,
And rank as a monarch in rhyme.
All faded and flown are the hopes that I cherished ;
Our editors laugh me to scorn ;
And my courage has died as my chances have perished.—
I wish that I'd never been born !

In my deepest of depths, though all else was denied me,
I fancied I still had a friend ;
A companion to pass through my struggles beside me,
And light up my life till its end.
But the friendship I deemed on so solid a basis
Hath fled and left me forlorn ;
And my life is a desert without an oasis—
I wish that I'd never been born !





A RECANTATION.

WAS it *I* who told my reader, just a little while ago,
Life was hardly worth my living in our wicked world
below ?

Did I say my past was empty ?—did I call my future drear ?
Did I hint that altogether everything was very queer ?
Nay, I never stained my paper, never dipt my pen in ink,
O'er a dream of indigestion only bred of naughty drink.
Still a dread suspicion haunts me. Bid the grim intruder fly.
Tell me kindly, tell me truly—gentle reader, *was* it I ?

Dimly, vaguely I remember—just before the doctor came—
Ugly thoughts that racked my conscience in an agony of shame.
Was it lunacy, I wonder, thrust the notion in my head
That the stars were unpropitious, and that I were better dead ?
Ghastly visions oft attack us in the darkness of the night,
Yet their hated reign of terror ceases in the early light.
If I ever told you, reader, earth was aught but all serene,
Goodness gracious, only fancy what a fib it must have been !

Man, methinks, is but a feather—slave to ev'ry breath of air
Happy now, and now in sorrow ; hoping, only to despair.
Man, methinks, instead of being firmly fixed as any rock,
To and fro is blindly driven as we drive a shuttlecock.
Oft the subtle fiend Neuralgia steals away the night's repose
Gout asserts a fell dominion o'er the digits or the toes.
Let no sigh escape the martyr ; be it his to grin and bear,
While the mask of mirth adroitly veils the ravages of care.

Did I ever tell you, reader, joy and hope would never more
Take my bosom for their lodgings, as they kindly did of yore ?
Don't believe a word I scribbled or a syllable I spoke ;
'Twas but in my fun I said it ; you'll excuse my little joke ?
Not a tiny care besets me, not a cloud is in my sky ;
Flow'rs bestrew the path before me. Reader, how is *that* for
high ?

Pray forgive the taradiddles I was rude enough to tell.
'Tis a way I have about me. Friendly reader, fare thee well !





SOLOMON IN THE SOUTH.

TO the "wisdom of nations" I cling very much,
And have grown a believer in sayings and saws ;
Whether British or Gallic, Italian or Dutch,
Or pronounced by the aid of Peninsular jaws.
There is one in particular, Spanish by birth,
Which appears to me matchless in many regards.
What a balm for nine-tenths of our troubles on earth
Is the proverb of "Patience, and shuffle the cards !"

At your side, when the game of this life was begun,
You had Faith with her whispers and Hope with her smile ;
But the Destinies willed—and their will must be done—
That your brow should be marked with defeat for a while.
Never fear ; better fortune to-morrow shall bring,
Which the Demon of Chance in his malice retards ;
And a bright ray of comfort and solace may spring
From the proverb of "Patience, and shuffle the cards !"

Pray remember, good friend, that you grieve not alone,
Like a wretch set apart from the rest of mankind.
We are most of us bullied by cares of our own,
But we take as restoratives all we can find.
There exists not the being completely forlorn ;—
Even I, the most morbid and bilious of bards,
Have a refuge and shelter from popular scorn
In the proverb of "Patience, and shuffle the cards !"



A DILEMMA.

TWO members of the softer sex
Have won my artless young affections,
And many doubts the heart perplex
When love is dragged in two directions.
I feel that either of the twain
I cannot bear the dread of losing;
To dream of wedding both were vain,
But, oh, the agony of choosing !

My Polly owns a master-mind,
And proves it in her conversation ;
Accomplishments of ev'ry kind
Have made her fit for any station ;
Red hair surmounts her freckled face,
Her eyes might gaze a little straighter—
But, were she as lovely as a Grace,
Her intellect could scarce be greater.

My Lizzie mocks the sunny morn
With all the brightness of her beauty ;
For ev'ry mortal ever born
To love the darling is a duty.
She ranks in all my tender dreams
Amongst the roses and the lilies ;
But, when she tries to talk, she seems
About the silliest of sillies.

Like this to "dwindle, peak, and pine,"
Is merely madness, only folly ;
I wonder, will the lot be mine
To "pop" to Lizzie or to Polly?
No more in doubt should I remain,
But make my choice at once for ever,
If Polly were not quite so plain,
Or Lizzie were a little clever.





LEADING QUESTIONS.

WHAT is Hope?—A broken bubble ;
What is Earth?—A prison-cell ;
What is Life?—A day of trouble ;
What is Pleasure?—None can tell.
If we find it all so brittle
In this world with trouble fraught,
May we not complain a little ?
Tell me, don't you think we *ought* ?

Though I know my Mary loved me—
When she found a richer swain
Calmly to the wall she shoved me,
Never to emerge again.
When it strikes the lively Polly
What a ruin she has wrought,
Should she not regret her folly ?
Tell me, don't you think she *ought* ?

Can't I well remember Freddy?—
Ev'ry hour of ev'ry day
He to borrow coin was ready,
But was ever loth to pay.
Why my patience did he nettle
Till we had a row and fought ?
Won't he take my hand, and settle ?
Tell me, don't you think he *ought* ?

STRAINS FROM THE STRAND.

Verses obviously clever
I can scribble when I try ;
But I cannot get them ever
Printed for the public eye.
They're as good as I can make them,
Not unlikely to be bought ;
Yet the Press will never take them ;—
Tell me, don't you think it *ought* ?

Lonely, day by day, I linger,
Like a hermit in his lair.
None will move a little finger
To relieve the *solitaire*.
All are in a league to slight me ;
Am I then a thing of nought ?
Folks to dinner ne'er invite me,
Tell me, don't you think they *ought* ?

Sad am I, and weary-hearted,
Wicked world ! at all your ways ;
And, when you and I are parted,
Calmly can I close my days.
Pooh ! To such a paltry matter
Is it well to give a thought ?
Let me end my silly chatter ;—
Tell me, don't you think I *ought* ?





TO MY DARLING.

TO call it Love would be absurd :—
The sentiment I feel
By such a short and common word
I never could reveal.
To tell you how, and when, and where
My passion grew and grew
This pen and ink would hardly dare ;—
But if you only knew !

It brings me joy and brings me grief,
It haunts me day and night.
The bottle yields me small relief,
And spoils my appetite.
I strive to hide my bitter cares
Within my manly breast.
I try to mind my own affairs ;—
But if you only guess'd !

Though people say I'm growing gray,
And also growing fat ;
I tell them in a kindly way
I'm none the worse for that.
I wear the sickly mask of mirth,
And smile as if exempt
From ev'ry mortal pang on earth ;—
But if you only dreamt !



TIRED !

IF I could fleetly fly to-day
By steamer or by rail,
And go a hundred miles away
By tidal or by mail ;
Could I apply to Mr. Cook,
Or else to Mr. Gaze,
How soon would I my journey book
For one-and-thirty days !

A lovely trip, so all agree,
The coast of Devon makes ;
Or I could pass, with utter glee,
A month among the Lakes.
The Peak is picturesquely grand ;
Romantic is the Wye ;
And hills there are in Taffyland
That run extremely high.

I might perchance my trip extend
Across the azure main
(Fair France the guide-books recommend,
And also sunny Spain).
The language of the lively Gaul
I speak with fluent ease,
And should not feel abroad at all
Beyond the Pyrenees.

In short, I long to take my flight
 For anywhere I list ;
 No perils awe, no risks affright,
 The bold excursionist.
 He looks all Europe in the face,
 And opposition braves,
 And represents the British race
 That never will be slaves.

'Tis hard on such a sunny day,
 At home to sit and think
 Of everything I wish to say
 With paper, pen, and ink.
 Still, Fate, be ruthless as you may,
 For once I mock your power :
 I've been with Fancy far away
 For more than half an hour !





STRIKING NOVELTIES.

OUR life is but a little day—
A leap from dawn to dark
(That seems to me, I beg to say,
A rather new remark).

The night, methinks, is very nigh
When disappears the morn ;
It strikes me we begin to die
The instant we are born.

That Hope, the traitor, will deceive,
Is true for evermore.
(This observation, I believe,
Was never made before.)
Her former slaves we daily see
The bondsmen of Despair.
It strikes me Hope can only be
Delusion and a snare.

To Love in age, or Love in youth,
Mankind will ever bow.
(A grandiose and subtle truth
We never knew till now.)
That Love is meek or Love is mild
I don't admit at all ;
It strikes me Love, although a child,
Sings not so very small.

Is Friendship, after all, the boon
That youth would make it out?
(This brain should help me very soon
To solve that novel doubt.)
Where's Brown, and Robinson, and Smith ;
Once fondly dear to me ?
It strikes me Friendship is a myth :
I've been and cut the three !





FAINT PRAISE.

SURVEY this earth in every part,
And one phenomenon is plain—
How oft the greatness of a heart
Reveals the smallness of a brain.
We call our world a wicked one,
And yet we know that ev'ry day
A host of proper deeds are done—
Though seldom in the proper way.

At school a model boy was I
(Serenely meek, serenely mild),
But never did my master try
To spare the rod and spoil the child.
What cruel stings my mem'ry brings
Of Doctor Birch's dreaded sway!
My tutor taught me many things—
But hardly in the proper way.

I fondly loved at seventeen,
And breathed my woe in Cockney rhyme;
However weak it may have been,
The lack of brains is not a crime.
But Cupid always had the knack
Of smiling only to betray;
She gave me what is called "the sack"—
But scarcely in the proper way.

I loved another very soon,
 Whom very soon I made my wife ;
 But, ever since our honeymoon,
 I feel a shade across my life.
 Upon the altar step she swore
 To love, to honour, and obey.
 I own she does it, less or more—
 Though rarely in the proper way.

My poems might procure me praise
 (They're not so bad, as poems go) ;
 But Piccadilly spurns my lays,
 As well as Paternoster Row.
 My friends are faithful, to a man ;
 In fact, sincerely I may say,
 They all do ev'rything they can—
 But nothing in the proper way.





BIRTHDAY LINES.

FORTY-FOUR, as I'm a sinner !
What was once my raven hair—
Getting grayer, growing thinner—
Drives me daily to despair.
Spring has flown—how quickly flew it !—
With its brief and sunny smile.
Should I bid the Fates renew it ?
Nay, 'tis hardly worth my while.

Emma Jane—but let me smother
Ev'ry symptom of my pain !—
Threw me over for another ;—
Widowed now is Emma Jane.
Rather wealthy she is reckoned,
Rich enough to live in style ;
Shall I try to be her second ?
Nay, 'tis hardly worth my while.

When my life was gay and gladsome,
Harry Smith, my bosom friend,
Wanted cash—and when I had some,
I was never loth to lend.
He's a thief—or little better ;
Conduct such as *that* is vile.
Shall I send a dunning letter ?
Nay, 'tis hardly worth my while.

Long ago my one ambition
Was to earn a poet's name,
And secure a proud position
In contemporary fame.
Ranking high among the leaders
I would quit the rank and file.
Shall I try to catch my readers?—
Nay, 'tis hardly worth my while.





A WHIM OF MINE.

A PROOF of morbid intellect
You'll fancy that you find
In this confession, or detect
Malignity of mind.
I don't profess a moral tone,
But brave my reader's ire.
This peccadillo let me own—
I love to see a fire !

They fill me with a fierce delight—
The clangour and the cry—
When engines in the dead of night
Go helter-skelter by.
Uprising in a hasty way
I don my worst attire,
And follow—fleetly as I may—
I love to see a fire !

How sweet the crowding and the crush,
The tumult and the din !
How grand the momentary hush
When roofs come tumbling in !
What rapture when the third-floor back
Flames like a fun'ral pyre !—
When beam and rafter hiss and crack !—
I love to see a fire !

A dozen vulgar folks or so
May perish in the flames,
But what of that ? I neither know
Their ages nor their names.
What kind of people they may be
'Tis useless to inquire ;
The sight has been a treat for *me* ;—
I love to see a fire !





LOVE IN ABSENCE.

AH, yes, devoutly I believe
That "absence makes the heart grow fonder."
For home the banished one will grieve,
In foreign countries over yonder.
His thoughts will oft unbidden stray
To seek the lowly little village
Whereat his father, day by day,
Devotes the happy hours to tillage.

The lover—on a distant shore
By fate compelled awhile to languish—
Will send epistles, o'er and o'er,
In terms expressive of his anguish.
For Time, in slow but steady flight,
Will fan the flame of recollection ;
And thoughts by day and dreams by night
Revive the embers of affection.

Long prostrate on my bed of pain,
To every earthly joy a stranger,
At last I greet the world again,
A convalescent "out of danger,"
My work, neglected for a time,
Is made by absence all the sweeter ;
With glee I spin the pleasant rhyme,
And weave the free-and-easy metre.

What clever folks the doctors are !
 My own to-day distinctly stated
 That I may smoke a mild cigar,
 When I am quite recuperated.
 Methinks a choice Intimidad
 Will suit my palate very nicely.
 Since I a lonely whiff have had
 It seems a century precisely.

He vaguely hints at bitter ale ;
 Ah me ! how I should love a bottle
 Of Allsopp's or of Bass's pale,
 To irrigate my thirsty throttle !
 The very sight of malt, perchance,
 Would spur my tired imagination,
 And cause my Pegasus to prance
 With long-abandoned animation.

In all your life you never penned
 A truer line, my Haynes, my Bayly !
 Whichever way my wants may tend,
 The wisdom of it haunts me daily.
 My wants may oft be unsupplied,
 But still upon your words I ponder ;
 And feel it ne'er can be denied
 That "absence makes the heart grow fonder."





TREASURY-DAY.

ON a search for new pleasures afar we may roam,
But the dearest are nearest at hand.
What a source of enjoyment awaits me at home
In my Saturday stroll through the Strand !
You may bear me to scenes that are brilliant and bright,
Among folks that are gleesome and gay ;
But you scarcely can show me as welcome a sight
As the Strand upon Treasury-Day.

There is mirth in the breezes and mirth in the skies,
And the children of Thespis are glad.
While he hurries to grasp his hebdomadal prize
Can the mime or the mummer be sad ?
See, the gait is defiant, the visage serene,
As he strides like a wolf to the prey.
Sunny hope—sunny faith—in their triumph are seen
In the Strand upon Treasury-Day.

And the nymphs of the chorus are here in their might,
And the nymphs of the ballet beside.
Though the spoils for the week may be shamefully slight,
They accept them with innocent pride.
'Tis a shame, such a grossly inadequate price
For such talent and beauty to pay ;
Still they seem very happy and look very nice
In the Strand upon Treasury-Day.

If you strayed with me, reader, up Wellington Street,
And its neighbouring street, christened Bow,
A disconsolate crew in the latter you'd meet,
Pacing idly the flags to and fro.
Let us pity them, reader, while passing along,
The poor players with nothing to play.
Not for them the delights of yon salaried throng
In the Strand upon Treasury-Day.

I've a faith in the Drama. Some folks may complain
That the Drama declines now and then ;
And that actors are jealous and fretful and vain
Like the rest of the children of men.
Well, I'm not over-young—though perhaps very green !
And I think I may venture to say
There is nought but good nature and smiles to be seen
In the Strand upon Treasury-Day.





TWO LINES.

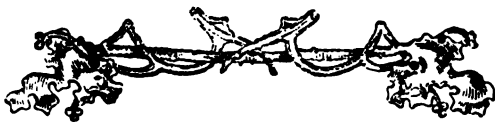
YEARS ago I trolled a ditty,
Rather brief but very gay,
Which was neither wise nor witty,
Though it haunts me till to-day.
When in pleasure—when in pain—
Still I chant my old refrain :
“Tol-de-riddy ! fal-de-ral !
Tout cela m'est bien égal !”

Life is either worse or better ;
Both extremes are on the list.
Why morosely turn a fretter ?
Come and be an optimist.
Whatsoe'er your lot may be,
Blithely carol, friend, with me :
“Tol-de-riddy ! fal-de-ral !
Tout cela m'est bien égal !”

Yonder sun in glory glowing
Care and sorrow keeps aloof ;
Does it rain or is it snowing ?
I've my trusty waterproof.
Let the day be foul or fair,
Hear me hum the sprightly air :
“Tol-de-riddy ! fal-de-ral !
Tout cela m'est bien égal !”

Not one hour is like another ;
Stormy nights bring shiny morns.
Bravely tread your path, my brother,
O'er the roses and the thorns.
Wisely make the best of all,
Sing with me whate'er befall :
"Tol-de-riddy ! fal-de-ral !
Tout cela m'est bien égal !"





AMATORY VERSES.

YOURS are eyes, my Mary Ann,
Bright as is the sky above you ;
Blest would be the happy man
Liking you enough to love you.
If his lucky lot were mine,
Life would be a blank without you.
I could dwindle, peak, and pine,
Had I cared the least about you.

Nay, I'll never pine or peak,
Never will I stoop to dwindle ;
I believe—the truth to speak—
Mary Ann, that you're a swindle.
Still, it would have been absurd
Even for an hour to doubt you,
Or to wrong you by a word,
Had I cared the least about you.





TO MY MUSE.

MUSE, you see the sunny weather?
Look ; we have the summer here !
Let's go out of town together ;
Don't be lazy, there's a dear !
Just a country ramble only,
Somewhere not so very far ;
Street and square are sad and lonely.
What a Cockney girl you are !

London is Utopia, Missis,
In the winter—in the spring ;
But on such a day as *this* is,
Town becomes another thing.
Ever blithely, ever gaily,
And in raptures ever new,
Have I sung its grandeur daily—
Thanks, my tender Muse, to you !

Fresh from London and its praises,
I may steal one song, it seems,
For the buttercups, the daisies,
And the meadows and the streams.
Will the gentle reader credit
Our bucolics second-hand ?
We will try, and yet I dread it—
We were safer in the Strand.

Out of London I'm a baby ;
This attempt is very rash ;
I shall make some error, maybe,
'Twixt the elm-tree and the ash.
I've no other Muse to call on ;
True are *you*, so true remain.
Put your bonnet and your shawl on,
Quick !—or we shall miss the train.





EVENINGS AT HOME.

WHAT enjoyments await us, my own little wife,
On a cheery though cold winter eve !—
There be charms in the calmly sedate married life
That the bachelor cannot conceive.
There are cards—there is chess—there is music, you know ;
Say the word, my love—what shall it be ?
(While you make up your mind let us banish below
The remains of the toast and the tea.)

I concur with you, dearest ; a song would be best.
Could you give me *The Mistletoe Bough* ?
'Tis a trifle old-fashioned, it must be confess'd,
But I think I should relish it now.
All your new-fangled lyrics I cannot endure ;
But I *do* love a ballad like that ;
By-the-way, what a nuisance it is, to be sure,
That you sing so confoundly flat !

Nay, it strikes me, my darling, you're scarce in the vein
To indulge me by warbling to-night ;
Let us fly to the board and the chessmen again,
As a source of unfailing delight.
I'm a novice, I grant it ; and only can play
In the strictly conventional grooves ;—
Yet I'm far above *you*, dear, I safely can say,
For I think that you just "know the moves."

Let us put up the chess, love, and pull out the cards :
To play whist one is *always* inclined.
(Double-dummy is equal in many regards
To the four-handed rubber, you'll find.)
Once again I must warn you of one little thing
That you rarely remember, I fear ;—
You should seldom, if ever, lead off with a king
When the ace is against you, my dear.

What a pity !—The music was *not* a success—
('Tis the fault of our Collard, no doubt) ;
We could hardly contrive to get on with our chess
(What on earth was your bishop about ?)
There's a sameness in whist when one *cannot* but get
The two trebles and also the rub.
Never mind : let us wait for to-morrow, my pet.
Come and kiss me. I'm off to the club !





MY CAREER.

I'M a student of character—*that's* my career—
For my field I've the mighty metropolis here.
From her streets and her alleys, her squares and her slums,
All the food for my genial philosophy comes.
From the outskirts of Peckham to Highgate I stray,
And from Brompton to Bermondsey day after day.
In its turn to each point of the compass I roam :—
All Cockayne is the student of character's home.

From aloft on the knifeboard I calmly survey
The full torrent of life as it sweeps on its way ;—
Though 'tis oft I prefer next the driver to perch,
Where a gold-mine of character crowns my research.
In the railway that buries its course underground
There are treasures of wild eccentricity found ;
While the steamers that waft me from Greenwich to Kew
Give me types ever varied and frequently new.

When my journey lies eastward I now and then stop
To procure in the City my steak or my chop.
What a bountiful feast for my labours I find !—
What a chance for acutely observing my kind !
While I see fellow-creatures absorbed in their food,
On their probable characteristics I brood ;
I distinguish a virtue or pounce on a fault
From their treatment of mustard—of pepper—of salt.

In the Temple of Thespis—I mean, at the play—
I get ample materials cast in my way.
It is rarely in vain that I silently sit.
Looking round for my prize from the front of the pit,
I conversed with a character, once on a time,
Who remembered old Farren when just in his prime ;
And a weird-looking fossil once bored me to death
With his talk about Siddons as *Lady Macbeth*.

Thus I gladly and gaily fulfil my career—
Whether nightly or daily, or distant or near ;
And the life of our London incessantly yields
A delight never known to the dwellers in fields.
Of his hills and his vales let the bumpkin be proud ;
I adore the Great City, her shops and her crowd.
Let your daisies and buttercups bloom where they will ;
This is home to the student of character still.





DE PROFUNDIS.

'TIS well to court the Comic Muse,
And build the light and lively rhyme,
For friends to smile as they peruse
My verse for just a little time.
Good souls, they greet my frolic lay
Where'er the jovial feast be spread.
They laugh to hear me sing to-day—
But will they laugh when I am dead?

I love to ply the jester's art,
And hold that all the ills on earth,
When rightly viewed, may well impart
A theme for merriment and mirth.
Not over-cynical the vein
That helps to bring me daily bread;
But will the bantlings of my brain
Make any laugh when I am dead?

Methinks 'twould be a happy thing
To say *Non omnis moriar*,
And leave my lines for some to sing
When I am flown to realms afar.
But better bards will soon arise
To play the songster in my stead;
So, friends, do all that in you lies
To laugh gaily when I am dead.

THE END.

19

